

INSIGHTS

OSHA Announces National "Step-Up for Safety" Campaign for Upstream Industry

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On February 19, 2016, OSHA announced the 2016 Step-Up for Safety Campaign to raise awareness about hazards in the oil and gas industry. The campaign is a joint effort among OSHA, the STEPS Network, and NIOSH.

Oil and gas drilling, well servicing, and production operations can be very dangerous. According to Dr. John Howard, Director of NIOSH, the industry has experienced a fatality rate approximately seven times higher than the rate of the average U.S. industry in the past 20 years. 85% of fatalities in the upstream industry result from four hazards: vehicle crashes, being struck by equipment, fires or explosions, and falls. The Step-Up for Safety Campaign is a voluntary event for employers to speak directly to employees about these and other safety issues. The campaign organizers hope that upstream employers will take a break during the workday and conduct a "toolbox talk" about the importance of safety or engage in a number of other events that focus on hazards in the workplace.

In conjunction with the campaign rollout, Dr. David Michaels, Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, reminded the public that OSHA has expanded its Severe Violator Enforcement Program ("SVEP") to include the upstream oil and gas industry. Generally under SVEP, employers who receive two or more willful, repeat, or failure-to-abate violations may be placed into the program. The SVEP designation results in increased inspections, negative publicity, damaged business relationships, and demanding settlement terms from the agency, which can include third-party monitoring of company safety and health operations.

RECOMMENDATION

Company leadership may notify Environment, Health, and Safety managers of the Step-Up for Safety Campaign, so they can review the materials provided by the agencies.

See www.oshastanddown.org for videos, resources, checklists, and additional information about the program.