

**N.C. Department of Labor Report on Impact of the Special Emphasis
Inspection Program on Safety and Health Compliance and Enforcement**

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Impact of the Special Emphasis Inspection Program on Safety and Health Compliance and Enforcement

**North Carolina Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Division**

Federal Fiscal Year 2025



Introduction

Pursuant to NCGS 95-136.1, the N.C. Department of Labor (NCDOL) submits the following annual report on the impact of the department's Special Emphasis Inspection Program (SEP) on employee safety and health compliance and enforcement.

To determine which specific industries and employers will be targeted for the SEP, the NCDOL uses multiple resources. Some industries designated as SEP's were initiated by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and are generated by high injury and illness rates or fatality rates on a national level. Most industries and specific employers though are selected for the SEP at the state level and are created during the strategic planning process. The decision to include an industry is based on a review of injury, illness and fatality data, and employment levels. Generally, industries with the highest employment levels and the highest injury and illness rates are selected as an SEP.

The NCDOL strategic planning process occurs on a five-year cycle, but SEP industries are evaluated annually. The NCDOL also annually reviews the plan to ensure that industry activity goals are met. The department is currently operating under a strategic plan cycle that became effective October 1, 2023 and concludes September 30, 2028. The data in this report reflects the strategic plan cycle that ran from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025.

The FY 2024-2028 Strategic Management Plan includes two primary outcome goals:

- Reduce the rate of workplace fatalities by 2%
- Reduce the rate of all workplace injuries and illnesses by 5%

The areas of emphasis included in the FY 2024-2028 Strategic Management Plan include:

- Construction Industry Fatality Reduction
- Logging and Arboriculture Fatality Reduction
- Warehousing and Storage and Related Products Distribution Industries Injury Reduction
- Long Term Care Injury Reduction
- Exposures for Health Hazards
- Food Manufacturing Injury Reduction
- Amputations Reduction

During the strategic planning process, outcome and activity goals are set for each industry. This report includes each industry's goal and the associated actual results. Baseline fatality rates were calculated by finding the average number of fatalities during an established period of time for the construction and logging and arboriculture industries. Baseline rates for Days Away, Restricted, or Transfer (DART) were also calculated based on the average of previous years' DART rates.

North Carolina continues to utilize a combination of compliance, consultation, and training as an effective approach toward reducing injury, illness, and fatality rates among all industries and employers. The success of this approach is evidenced by the state's total recordable case rate of 2.0 and a DART rate of 1.1 for CY 2024, both decreases from the previous year.

**Impact of the Special Emphasis Inspection Program (SEP)
On Safety and Health Compliance and Enforcement FY 2024-2028**

1.1 Reduce Construction Industry Fatality Rate Statewide by 2% by the end of FY 2028

Great strides have been made in safety and health in the construction industry. The total number of 108 construction fatalities, which occurred during the baseline period of FY 2020 – FY 2024, indicated that this industry was still a leader in workplace deaths that could have a significant impact on the state’s overall outcome goal of reducing the rate of workplace fatalities.

Outcome

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Fatalities	26	18	23	23	15	27
Rate	.0113	.0076	.0090	.0090	.0055	.0098

*Rate calculated using available Division of Employment Security data through only the 2nd quarter of 2025; therefore, this rate is considered preliminary data and will be recalculated when 2025 annual data is available.

Activity in Emphasis Counties

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	1,193	1,078	1,050	914	862	808
Goals	1,050	1,050	1,050	800	800	800
Consultation	394	437	429	463	487	471
Goals	250	250	250	290	300	300
Trained*	1,346	814	802	2,157	1,391	2,523
Goals*	1,750	1,750	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

*Includes all persons trained in the construction industry.

1.2 Decrease Fatality Rate in Logging and Arboriculture Activity (NAICS 56173 and 11331) by 2% by the end of FY 2028

North Carolina has had success in the past reducing the number of logging and arboriculture fatalities. Experience has shown that a reduction in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) activity can translate into an increase in the number of injuries and fatalities in this industry. The first state SEP for logging was initiated in FY 1994 in response to 13 logging fatalities in FY 1993.

Outcome

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Fatalities	6	6	6	2	4	6
Rate	.0155	.0146	0.0146	0.0057	.0057	.0167

*Rate calculated using available Division of Employment Security data through only the 2nd quarter of 2025; therefore, this rate is considered preliminary data and will be recalculated when 2025 annual data is available.

Activity in Logging and Arboriculture Industry

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	28	34	30	22	15	20
Goals	30	30	25	20	24	24
Consultation	21	17	17	15	16	20
Goals	13	15	15	15	15	15
Trained	65	180	264	470	623	519
Goals	75	75	75	150	150	150

2.1 Reduce the Injury and Illness Rate in Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers (NAICS 4244) by 5% by the end of FY 2028

The state’s strategic planning process includes statistical analysis to determine which industry groups have high injury and illness rates that could affect the state’s goal of reducing the overall injury and illness rate. The baseline DART rate for Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers is 3.4, which is more than three times higher than the most recent overall DART rate of 1.1. For this reason, this industry remains an area of emphasis in the current Strategic Management Plan.

Outcome

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
DART Rate	3.3	3.1	3.2	4.0	3.4	TBD

Activity in Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	15	26	21	25	47	42
Goals	14	15	20	20	24	24
Consultation	0	8	3	12	45	26
Goals	0	3	3	3	3	12
Trained	23	16	15	45	401	141
Goals	15	26	21	25	40	40

Reduce the Days Away, Restricted, or Transferred (DART) Rate in Warehousing and Storage (NAICS 493) by 5% by the end of FY 2028

The baseline DART rate for Warehousing and Storage is 3.4, which is more than three times higher than the most recent overall DART rate of 1.1. For this reason, this industry was added as a new area of emphasis to the current Strategic Management Plan.

Outcome

	Baseline	2022	2023	2024	2025
DART Rate	3.5	5.6	3.7	3.4	TBD

2.2 Reduce the Days Away, Restricted, or Transferred (DART) Rate in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities by 5% by the end of FY 2028

While progress has been made in this industry group, the 2024 DART rate of 3.0 is still more than the overall DART rate of 1.1. Under Commissioner Josh Dobson in July 2021, a COVID-19 healthcare standard was promulgated by OSH as a measure to reduce the negative effects of the pandemic for employees in the LTC industry. COVID-19 infections among employees working in long-term care facilities have decreased significantly in the since 2022, resulting in a lower overall DART rate.

Outcome

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
DART Rate	3.4	7.2	4.3	7.0	3.8	3.0	TBD

Activity in Long-Term Care

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
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Inspections	28	46	32	33	26	28
Goals	29	24	24	24	24	24
Consultation	30	44	41	38	38	37
Goals	21	10	35	30	30	30
Trained	15	46	27	33	59	49
Goals	25	40	40	40	40	40

2.3 Conduct Emphasis Inspections, Training, and Consultation Activity in Establishments Where Employees Might be Exposed to Health Hazards Such as Lead, Silica, Beryllium, Hexavalent Chromium, and Isocyanates

North Carolina has established the health hazards special emphasis program to address health hazards in the workplace, including lead, silica, beryllium, hexavalent chromium, and isocyanates. A reduction in illnesses relating to the emphasis health hazards could have an effect in the primary outcome goal of reducing the overall injury and illness rate during the five-year cycle of the Strategic Plan.

Activity for Selected Health Hazards

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	86	97	91	105	94	71
Goals	90	75	60	60	100	100
Consultation	169	169	195	205	162	259
Goals	135	125	125	125	125	125
Trained	238	388	400	450	450	447
Goals	280	300	300	300	300	300

2.4 Reduce the Injury and Illness Rate (DART) in Establishments in Food Manufacturing (NAICS 311) by 5% by the end of FY 2028

The strategic planning process is intended to allocate limited resources in those areas of emphasis with above average injury and illness rates to impact the overall state injury and illness rate. The food manufacturing DART rate for North Carolina was more than the North Carolina average for all industries including state and local government. For this reason, food manufacturing remains in the current Strategic Management Plan.

Outcome

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
DART Rate	2.1	3.0	2.6	2.8	1.9	1.4	TBD

Activity in Food Manufacturing

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	41	51	39	29	21	18
Goals	40	20	25	25	24	24
Consultation	16	16	24	15	12	16
Goals	12	12	12	12	12	12
Trained	23	32	61	47	59	44
Goals	25	25	40	40	40	40

2.5 Reduce the Number of Amputations Statewide by 5% by the end of FY 2028

A review of the annual number of amputations reported to NCDOL as required by 29 CFR 1904.39

revealed an increase in incidents where at least a portion of a single digit had been amputated. The Amputations SEP was added to the Strategic Management Plan, with FY 2019 designated as a planning year.

Activity in Amputations

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Inspections	133	162	163	171	183	164
Goals	105	100	150	150	180	180
Consultation	124	175	176	267	191	220
Goals	100	80	100	100	100	100
Trained	365	690	681	1,217	1,913	1,575
Goals	133	162	163	173	400	400

Summary

North Carolina has developed a Strategic Management Plan with specific areas of emphasis made up of employers with a high rate of serious injuries and illnesses. This approach is consistent with the requirements of NCGS 95-136.1. The state’s specific overall outcome goals include reducing the rate of workplace fatalities by 2% and reducing the rate of workplace injuries and illnesses by 5% by September 30, 2028. The plan also provides program guidance for the most appropriate allocation of resources in pursuit of the outcome goals.

As well as overall outcome goals, the plan includes activity and outcome goals for specific areas of emphasis included in the plan. Each of the plan’s areas of emphasis is managed by a specific Strategic Management Plan committee made up of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Division employees. Strategies to achieve outcome goals are continuously reviewed and can be altered to enhance program performance. Any changes to the plan are documented annually.

Specific performance goals have been established for the current five-year strategic planning cycle that runs from October 1, 2023 (FY 2024) to September 30, 2028 (FY 2028). The carry-overs from the previous five-year plan include construction, logging and arboriculture, food manufacturing, long-term care, exposures for specific health hazards, and amputations. The new Strategic Management Plan expands the grocery and related product merchant wholesalers to include additional emphasis on warehousing and storage. It has been renamed Warehousing and Storage and Related Products Distribution Industries to better reflect this expanded scope.

The success of the OSH Division special emphasis inspection program is measured by the continuous reduction in employer injury and illness rates. The most recent total recordable case rate of 2.0 and DART rate of 1.1 for calendar year 2024 are statistically significantly lower than calendar year 2023.