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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
ACT OF 1970
(S. 2193, P.L. 91-596)**

PREPARED BY THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
PUBLIC WELFARE
UNITED STATES SENATE



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FOREWORD

The enactment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 represents a landmark achievement in safeguarding the health and lives of America's working men and women. Its passage was the culmination of an effort in the 91st Congress to bring significant safety and health protection to the vast majority of American workers through the adoption of not only this act, but also the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act and the Construction Safety Act.

This particular public law can well be said to constitute a safety bill of rights for close to 60 million workers. It has been needed for decades, as the statistics on death and injury in the workplace so thoroughly indicate. The fact that during the period 1960 through 1969 more than 140,000 workers were killed on the job, and nearly 21 million are known to have been injured, is only part of the testimony to the problem.

To the tragedy of industrial accidents must be added the grim history of our failure to heed the occupational health needs of our workers. Not only are occupational diseases which first came to light at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution still undermining the health of workers, but new substances, new processes, and new sources of energy are presenting health problems of ever-increasing complexity.

This background lends emphasis to the need for vigorous enforcement of this present legislation, so that the national neglect which has brought so much pain and suffering to generations of American workers will be a thing of the past.

Enforcement of this law will undoubtedly raise many questions regarding the congressional intent behind its various provisions. To aid those who will be responsible for such enforcement, and the public to which the law's requirements and protections will apply, I have asked the committee staff to compile this legislative history, with the assistance of Mr. Fred E. Strine, of the Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor, under whose direction the two indexes were prepared. It is expected that this compilation should also be of considerable benefit to the Congress and, in particular, to the members of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, in their continuing legislative review of this act's administration.

HARRISON A. WILLIAMS, Jr.,
Chairman.



Public Law 91-596
91st Congress, S. 2193
December 29, 1970

An Act

84 STAT. 1590

To assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women; by authorizing enforcement of the standards developed under the Act; by assisting and encouraging the States in their efforts to assure safe and healthful working conditions; by providing for research, information, education, and training in the field of occupational safety and health; and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970".

Occupational
Safety and
Health Act of
1970.

CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

SEC. (2) The Congress finds that personal injuries and illnesses arising out of work situations impose a substantial burden upon, and are a hindrance to, interstate commerce in terms of lost production, wage loss, medical expenses, and disability compensation payments.

(b) The Congress declares it to be its purpose and policy, through the exercise of its powers to regulate commerce among the several States and with foreign nations and to provide for the general welfare, to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources—

(1) by encouraging employers and employees in their efforts to reduce the number of occupational safety and health hazards at their places of employment, and to stimulate employers and employees to institute new and to perfect existing programs for providing safe and healthful working conditions;

(2) by providing that employers and employees have separate but dependent responsibilities and rights with respect to achieving safe and healthful working conditions;

(3) by authorizing the Secretary of Labor to set mandatory occupational safety and health standards applicable to businesses affecting interstate commerce, and by creating an Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for carrying out adjudicatory functions under the Act;

(4) by building upon advances already made through employer and employee initiative for providing safe and healthful working conditions;

(5) by providing for research in the field of occupational safety and health, including the psychological factors involved, and by developing innovative methods, techniques, and approaches for dealing with occupational safety and health problems;

(6) by exploring ways to discover latent diseases, establishing causal connections between diseases and work in environmental conditions, and conducting other research relating to health problems, in recognition of the fact that occupational health standards present problems often different from those involved in occupational safety;

(7) by providing medical criteria which will assure insofar as practicable that no employee will suffer diminished health, functional capacity, or life expectancy as a result of his work experience;

(8) by providing for training programs to increase the number and competence of personnel engaged in the field of occupational safety and health;