

# NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Announces Top 10 Public-Sector Workplace Hazards of 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TRENTON** – With some workers returned to in-person work, and others whose jobs require them to be on-site, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) released the top 10 public-sector workplace safety and health hazards reported in 2021, in order to raise awareness of the most common workplace risks.

This list was compiled by NJDOL’s Office of Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH), which is responsible for inspecting, investigating, consulting and helping mitigate workplace hazards, and educating workers and employers on workplace safety to ensure the safety and health of public employees.

“The point of this annual compilation is to make public workers and employers aware of the most common workplace risks, so everyone can take steps toward ensuring a safe workplace,” said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. “Our Office of Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health exists not only to seek and find workplace hazards, but to proactively prevent accidents and tragedies from happening.”

Here are NJDOL’s top 10 safety and health hazards in public-sector workplaces for 2021:

1. **Lack of exit routes or emergency plans** – no emergency evacuation plan or means of accounting for evacuated employees in an emergency; exits blocked or not clearly marked.
2. **Electrical issues** – risks of electrical shock, electrocution, or electrical fires; overloaded circuits or power cords; electrical exposures in wet or damp locations; exposed electrical conductors and ungrounded electrical connections or equipment.
3. **Hazardous energy not controlled** – power not disengaged or locked out before servicing starts on heavy machinery; stored energy not released from machine before performing maintenance, such as air being released from an air compressor.
4. **No machine guards** – machinery points of operation or moving parts not covered to prevent injury (no safety shields on saws, for example).
5. **Walking hazards** – open holes in floor or ground; no guardrails on elevated platforms; no railings on stairs; tripping and slipping hazards.
6. **Improper storage** – materials stacked in an unstable manner or stored improperly; moving materials without applicable training (e.g. forklift certification).
7. **Lack of communications regarding hazardous substances** – insufficient communication regarding on-site toxic or hazardous materials and their use; lack of instruction for users on how to handle materials or what protection to wear (e.g. gloves, face shield, respirator); no instructions on what to do if an accidental exposure occurs.
8. **Insufficient fire prevention efforts** – flammable or combustible materials stored improperly; no plan for preventing unintentional ignition.
9. **Issues in confined spaces** – lack of permit or improper mitigation of hazards in confined spaces (a potential buildup of gases, for example) that may create an unsafe work area; confined spaces built in such a way that someone entering could be asphyxiated or trapped. These spaces require a permit to ensure steps were taken to mitigate hazards, air quality is monitored, and an attendant and emergency personnel are on standby in case of emergency before an employee enters the space.
10. **Hazards to firefighter** – Noncompliance with New Jersey Administrative Code N.J.A.C 12:100.7 for firefighters, which covers regulations involving turnout gear, apparatus, fire department organizational structure, duties and special services performed, training, self-contained breathing apparatus, and safety protocols.

PEOSH posts alerts on the [NJDOL website](#) when recurring health and safety issues arise. Its [most recent bulletin](#) was published in response to the potential dangers of electronic access and egress control systems and/or electromagnetically locked egress doors.



**NJ Labor Department**  
@NJLaborDept  
NJDOL has a huge mission. There will certainly be new and lingering challenges in 2022, but at every turn, our team is driven by the continuing fight on behalf of our workers and employers.  
  
The department outlines the accomplishments of the past year:  
[bit.ly/3FSCC0e](https://bit.ly/3FSCC0e)



PEOSH also offers free on-site consultations in which staff works directly with employers to mitigate any dangers before someone gets hurt.

Free site visits can include, but are not limited to, assessments of physical dangers, electrical safety, slip hazards, air quality, and noise. Consultations are performed to federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, but will not result in any citations, penalties, or fines.

Federal OSHA inspects and evaluates health and safety for private industry. Learn more about OSHA's top 10 hazards for private employees [here](#).

Additionally, NJDOL can assist businesses interested in any of a multitude of safety training courses, from Electrical Safe Work Practices, Forklift Safety, and Control of Hazardous Energy to Material Handling, Back Safety, and Lifting Techniques.

For more information on NJDOL’s Division of Public Safety and Occupational Safety and Health, including how to file workplace safety concern or sign up for a free workplace health and safety consultation or training, please visit the Division’s newly enhanced website:  
<https://www.nj.gov/labor/safetyandhealth/>

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Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Home

COVID-19 Resources

- FAQs for Workers
- COVID-19 Scenarios and Benefits
- Federal and State Extended Unemployment Benefits
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance
- Health and Safety During COVID-19
- FAQs for Businesses
- Information for Working Parents and Caregivers
- Additional Resources and Support

File or Access Your Claim

- Temporary Disability Insurance
- Family Leave Insurance
- Maternity Leave
- Unemployment Insurance
- Social Security Disability

Worker Protections

- Your Rights at Work
- Workers' Compensation
- Safety and Health
- Wage & Hour Compliance
- Paid Sick Leave

Career Support

- Career Services

**Employer Services**

- Employer Accounts
- Layoffs and Closings
- Wage & Hour Compliance
- Business Support
- Apprenticeship
- Industry Partnerships
- Employer Handbook
- Employer Poster Packet
- Equal Pay Act Reporting

**Research & Information**

- Labor Market Information
- Grant Opportunities
- Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Legal Notices
- Press Releases

**About Us**

**Statewide**

- Governor Phil Murphy
- Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver
- NJ Home
- Services A to Z
- Departments/Agencies
- FAQs
- Contact Us
- Privacy Notice
- Legal Statement & Disclaimers
- Accessibility Statement

