

FEBRUARY 9, 2026 | STATE OSH PLANS

# State Plan Signals 2025-2026

BY DARIUS ROHANI-SHUKLA

By [Darius Rohani-Shukla](#)

While Federal OSHA establishes the baseline for OSHA standards, it is increasingly no longer the full story for employers. Indeed, the real compliance challenge today is keeping up with state plans as rules, guidance, and enforcement priorities can change quickly and diverge significantly. States are pushing hard on operationally complex, enforcement-friendly issues such as heat, ergonomics, workplace violence programs, and inspection procedures. This post highlights some of the developments from the past six months most likely to matter in practice.

## Arizona: Turning up the Heat on Temperature Safety Guidance

In 2025, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs issued [Executive Order 2025-09](#), directing the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health (ADOSH) to lead the state's heat safety efforts. By the end of the year, ADOSH's Workplace Heat Safety Task Force delivered recommendations calling for written Heat Illness Prevention Plans and core protections such as water, rest, shade, acclimatization, and training. Although Arizona does not yet have a codified heat standard, ADOSH's Heat State Emphasis Program, guidance, and enforcement activity are already shaping employer expectations around heat hazards.

## Washington: Warming up to Indoor Heat Rules

Washington State's new safety and health regulatory agenda includes potential rulemaking on lead exposure, infectious disease response, PPE fit, inspection procedures, and updates to core safety rules, with indoor heat now identified as an emerging occupational safety issue. Although no proposal or timeline has been announced, indoor heat's inclusion in the rulemaking pipeline is an important signal and often the first step toward a formal standard, guidance, or expanded enforcement (as reflected in [L&I's January-June 2026 semi-annual rulemaking agenda](#)).

## Washington: Easing into a new Ergonomics Program

Washington's Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) is in the early stages of building a new, [statewide ergonomics program](#), and it is doing so in a well-structured phases. Rather than regulating all industries at once, L&I is rolling out ergonomics rules industry by industry. Right now, airline ground crew operations and fulfillment centers are next on the list. Early 2026 advisory committee materials focus on how the rules will work in practice,

such as how employers would assess ergonomic risks, what performance-based requirements might look like, and what core elements would apply across industries. L&I has also made clear that, under the enabling legislation, any new ergonomics rules cannot take effect before July 1, 2026, and must be finalized at least 120 days in advance.

### **California: Deepening Workplace Safety through a 2-Pronged Approach**

California continues to pursue two parallel regulatory tracks, which, rather than standing alone, drive meaningful changes in the defense landscape at their intersection.

**Workplace violence prevention** in general industry is moving from a statutory mandate to a detailed, auditable regulatory program. Following the July 1, 2024 effective date of California’s workplace violence prevention law, the Cal/OSHA Standards Board convened an advisory committee on November 12, 2025 to review revisions to a draft workplace violence prevention standard. The discussion focused on the structure and scope of the regulation, including plan requirements, definitions of workplace violence and workplace violence hazards, employee representative roles, incident response and investigation procedures, training, and recordkeeping. The draft reads less like general guidance and more like a compliance program framework—an evolution that typically drives inspection focus, audit-style reviews, and more developed citation theories as the rulemaking advances toward adoption in 2026.

*Separately, SB 606 implementation continues to mature* through rulemaking led by the California Department of Industrial Relations. The implementing materials reinforce the statute’s enterprise-wide and egregious enforcement concepts, and explicitly framing “egregious” violations within a violation-by-violation penalty structure. Read alongside existing Cal/OSHA enforcement policies, the practical signal is continued movement away from single-site, single-citation cases and toward mechanisms that allow inspections, penalties, and exposure to scale across worksites and corporate entities.

### **Kentucky: State Plan Alignment with Federal OSHA**

Effective June 27, 2025, Kentucky enacted **HB 398**, making significant changes to the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Act. HB 398 drove Kentucky’s program largely into alignment with federal OSHA by adding a limitations period for citations, creating a de minimis category for administrative violations, reducing the repeat lookback period from five years to three, permitting fee and cost recovery on appeal in certain circumstances, and adding a personal knowledge requirement for reporting an alleged violation.

### **Oregon: Diagnosing New Rules to Address Behavioral Health and Workplace Violence**

Oregon OSHA has initiated **formal rulemaking** to implement two recently enacted state laws that significantly expand employer obligations in behavioral health, substance use disorder treatment, and certain health care settings. Together, these laws create parallel employer-facing tracks that are likely to shape inspection priorities and enforcement going forward.

**H.B. 2024** applies to behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment settings and establishes employee reporting and complaint mechanisms tied to worker safety violations, including the possibility of inspections and investigations triggered by complaints to the state. The law also requires employers to provide general worker

safety training addressing workplace risks, use of safety equipment and emergency communication devices, de-escalation techniques, incident reporting options, and scenario-based or role-playing exercises.

[S.B. 537](#) imposes workplace violence prevention and response requirements on certain health care employers, including hospitals and home health providers. Covered employers must implement a workplace violence prevention plan with procedures for incident reporting, internal investigations, post-incident response, and support for affected workers, including first aid, medical care, and trauma counseling.

Because of an emergency clause, both laws are already in effect, with a July 1, 2026, implementation date for provisions tied to the Oregon Safe Employment Act, prompting Oregon OSHA to move forward with a formal, stakeholder-driven rulemaking process.

### **Conclusion**

Recent state plan activity shows a consistent pattern. States are turning complex risks such as heat, ergonomics, and workplace violence into formal, program-based requirements, while also adjusting enforcement tools that affect how cases are inspected, cited, and penalized. For employers, the practical challenge is understanding not just new standards, but how state plans are reshaping enforcement expectations and defense exposure.