

Recordkeeping 201: Part six

What are 'other recordable cases'?

Editor's note: This installment discusses some of the finer points of coding a case in the "other recordable cases" category on the OSHA 300 log. For a more general introduction to classifying cases, see Recordkeeping 101, Part 2.

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Recording a work-related injury or illness as an "other recordable case" requires more judgment and knowledge of the OSHA recordkeeping requirements and more monitoring of the health care treatment provided to the injured worker than does coding any other type of case. The OSHA log is a tool for recording and counting work-related injuries and illnesses that reach the level of severity where the affected worker misses time from work, is unable to perform his or her regular work duties or requires medical treatment. Not all work-related injuries will rise to this level of severity.

In its simplest definition, an other recordable case is a work-related injury or illness that does not involve death, one or more days away from work, or one or more days of restricted work or job transfer, and where the employee receives medical treatment beyond first aid. Remember that days away from work, days of restricted work and days of job transfer begin after the day the injury occurred or the illness began.

Thus, if the injured worker does not receive medical treatment (as defined below) but misses a day of work, the case is recorded as a days-away-from-work case. If the injured worker does not receive medical treatment and does not lose any time from work, the case is not recordable.

Work-related injuries and illnesses that do not meet the standard for being counted as recordable cases should be removed from the OSHA log to ensure they are not mistakenly included in the incident rate calculations. This does not mean these injuries and illnesses should be ignored; they are often indicative of hazards and conditions that could lead to more severe injuries and illnesses and should be investigated, with hazards mitigated.

The definitions of medical treatment and first aid are vital to understanding which injuries and illnesses are other recordable cases and which are not recordable cases. This installment will focus on the definition of medical care; the next installment will focus on first aid. If you wish to read ahead, see the OSHA recordkeeping requirements at 1904.7(b)(i).



What is a medical treatment?

Medical treatment is defined in the recordkeeping requirements at 1904.7(b)(i). Medical treatment means the management and care of a patient to combat disease or disorder. Visits to a health care professional or a hospital for observation, testing, diagnosis or to evaluate diagnostic decisions are excluded from the definition of medical treatment. Diagnostic procedures are used to determine whether an injury or illness exists, and do not involve the therapeutic treatment of the patient.

Counseling is excluded from the definition of medical treatment, regardless of whether the counselor is a licensed health care professional or an unlicensed person with limited training.

Prescription medications are powerful substances that can only be prescribed by a licensed health care professional. The issuance of a prescription is regarded as medical treatment, regardless of whether any medication was actually taken by the patient. Cases in which the injured or ill worker is given a prescription from a health care professional need to be coded, whether the prescription is filled or taken. The worker's acceptance or refusal of the treatment does not alter the fact that a health care professional judges treatment is necessary. This includes cases where a health care professional tells a patient to take prescription pain medication only if pain relief is needed, and no pills were taken.

Prescriptions for medications available over-the-counter are not considered medical treatment if they are used at nonprescription strength. However, if a drug available in both prescription and nonprescription strengths, such as ibuprofen, is used or recommended for use by a licensed health care professional at prescription strength, then the criterion for medical treatment is met and the case must be recorded.

The use of orthopedic devices, such as splints or casts, is considered medical treatment. These devices are typically prescribed by licensed health care professionals for long-term use and are typically used for serious injuries and illnesses. However, orthopedic devices used only during an emergency to stabilize an accident victim during transport to a medical facility are not considered medical treatment.

Because physical therapy and chiropractic manipulation are treatments used for more serious injuries and are provided by licensed personnel with advanced training, they are considered medical treatment beyond first aid. If a chiropractor provides observation, counseling, diagnostic procedures or first aid procedures for a work-related injury or illness, the case would not be recordable.

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Top 10 recordkeeping tips

Get the top 10 recordkeeping tips -- in a handy one-page format -- to keep with your OSHA log and to use when training new log recordkeepers: www.dli.mn.gov/OSHA/PDF/rcdkpg10tips.pdf.



Next installment in the series

Look for more information about other recordable cases, with a focus on first aid, in the next installment of this series.