

# The State of Oil & Gas Safety

631 OSHA Inspections. \$3.9M in Penalties.  
What Every Operator Needs to Know.

<b>631</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>\$3.9M</b>	<b>80</b>
Inspections	Citation Rate	Initial Penalties	Fatality / Catastrophe Cases



Photo: Active drilling rig operation. Source: Unsplash (free license).

**Data Period:** January 2024 – March 2026

**NAICS Codes:** 213111 (Drilling Oil & Gas Wells) & 213112 (Support Activities)

**Source:** OSHA Inspection & Citation Database (IMIS)

**Published:** March 2026

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## 01 Executive Summary

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Between January 2024 and early 2026, OSHA conducted **631 inspections** of oil and gas drilling and support companies (NAICS 213111 and 213112) across the United States. Of those, **263 resulted in citations**, a citation rate of **42%**, meaning nearly half of all inspected companies walked away with at least one violation.

The total initial penalties assessed exceeded **\$3.88 million**, with current penalties (after settlements and reductions) standing at **\$2.72 million**, a **30% reduction** through contest and informal settlement processes. The most alarming finding: **80 inspections were triggered by fatalities or catastrophic events**, with a 59% citation rate in those cases.

**Key Insight:** The General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act, was the single most cited standard with 42 citations. This catch-all provision means OSHA found hazards with no specific standard to cite, suggesting emerging risks that operators are not yet addressing in their safety programs.

## 02 Methodology

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This report analyzes **publicly available OSHA citation analysis data** extracted directly from the website of the **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)**, specifically the **Integrated Management Information System (IMIS)**, the official public database maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor.

**Data collection:** We queried the OSHA IMIS industry search interface for all inspection records under NAICS codes 213111 (Drilling Oil and Gas Wells) and 213112 (Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations), covering the period from January 1, 2024 through March 12, 2026. Each of the 631 inspection detail pages was individually accessed to extract complete citation data, penalty amounts, violation classifications, and establishment addresses.

**Scope:** The dataset includes 940 individual citation/inspection records across 631 unique inspections. Records include both inspections that resulted in citations and those that were closed without findings. All 50 states plus territories are represented where applicable.

**Limitations:** Cases opened in late 2025 and 2026 may still be under investigation, meaning their citation rates appear artificially low. Penalty amounts labeled "current" reflect the latest available figure, which may change as cases move through contest and settlement.



*Workers in full PPE on an oil rig. Safety compliance is both a regulatory and operational imperative. Photo: Pro-Gas Services (publicly accessible).*

All data in this report was pulled from publicly available OSHA citation analysis data from the website of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for the 2024 through 2026 time frame. Source: OSHA IMIS Database, <https://www.osha.gov/ords/imis/industry.search>. Data extracted March 2026.

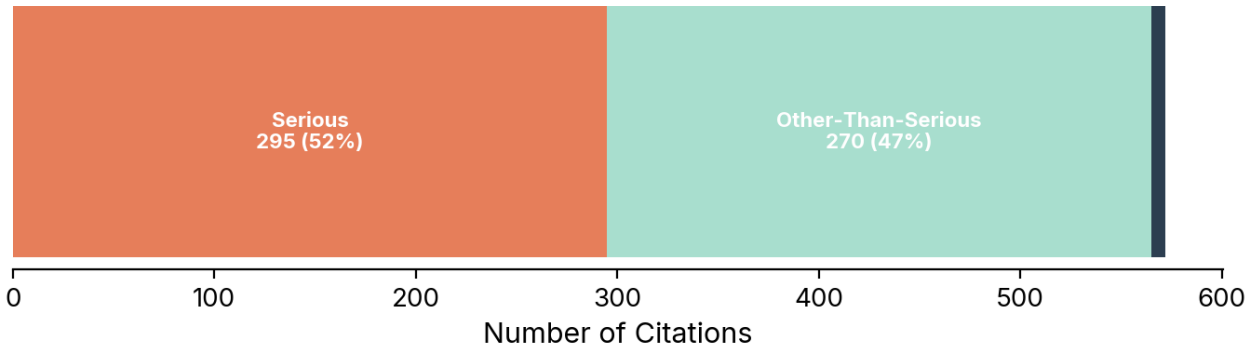
## 03 The National Picture

Across 631 inspections nationwide, OSHA cited **42% of all companies inspected**. This means that if an OSHA compliance officer walks onto your drilling site or service operation, there is nearly a coin-flip chance you will receive a citation.

<b>631</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>135</b>
Total Inspections	With Citations	Citation Rate	Open Cases

Of the 572 individual violation citations issued, **295 were classified as Serious (52%)**, meaning OSHA determined there was a substantial probability of death or serious physical harm. Four citations were classified as **Repeat** violations, and two as **Willful**: the most severe classification, indicating the employer intentionally and knowingly committed the violation.

### 52% of Citations Are Classified as Serious

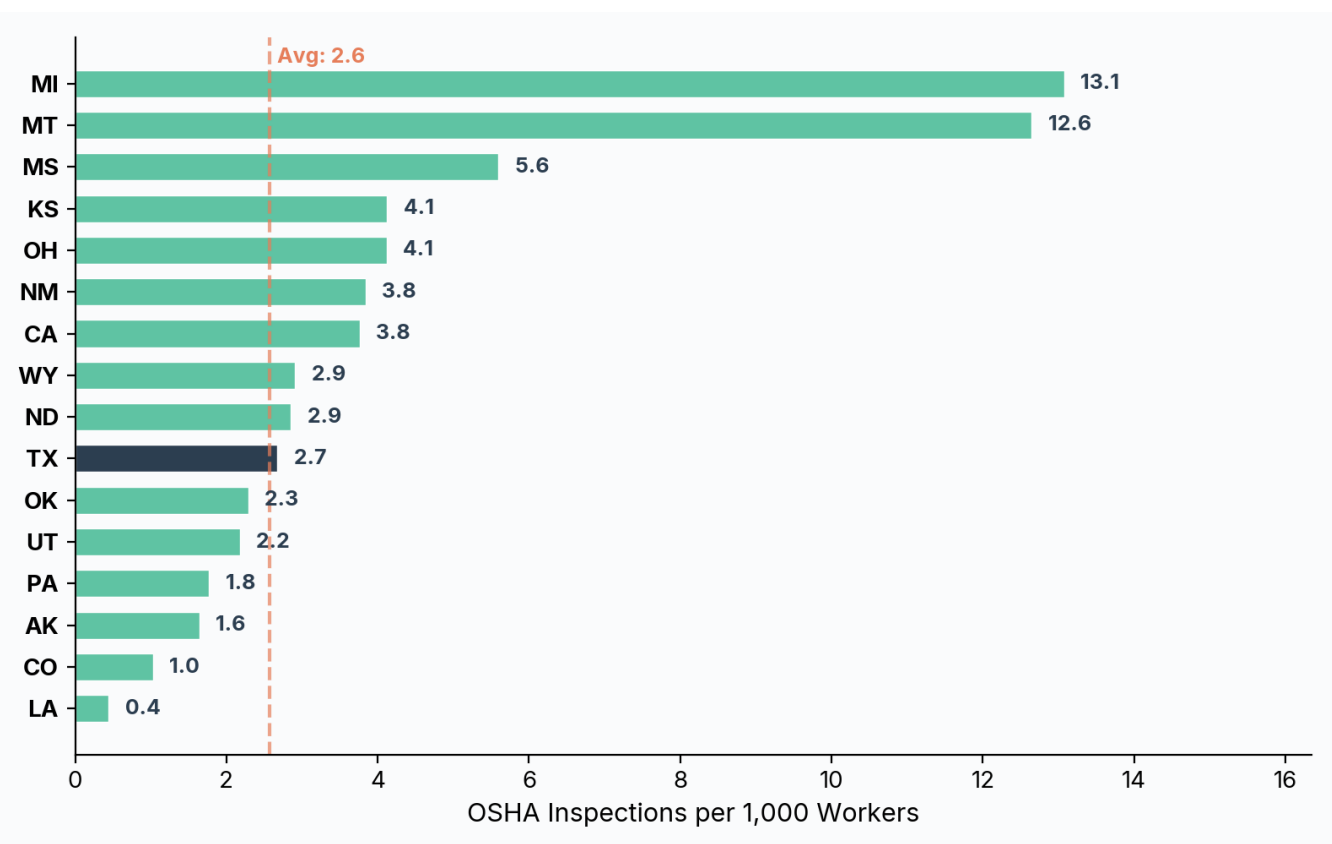


Distribution of 572 citations by violation severity classification.

## 04 Geographic Breakdown

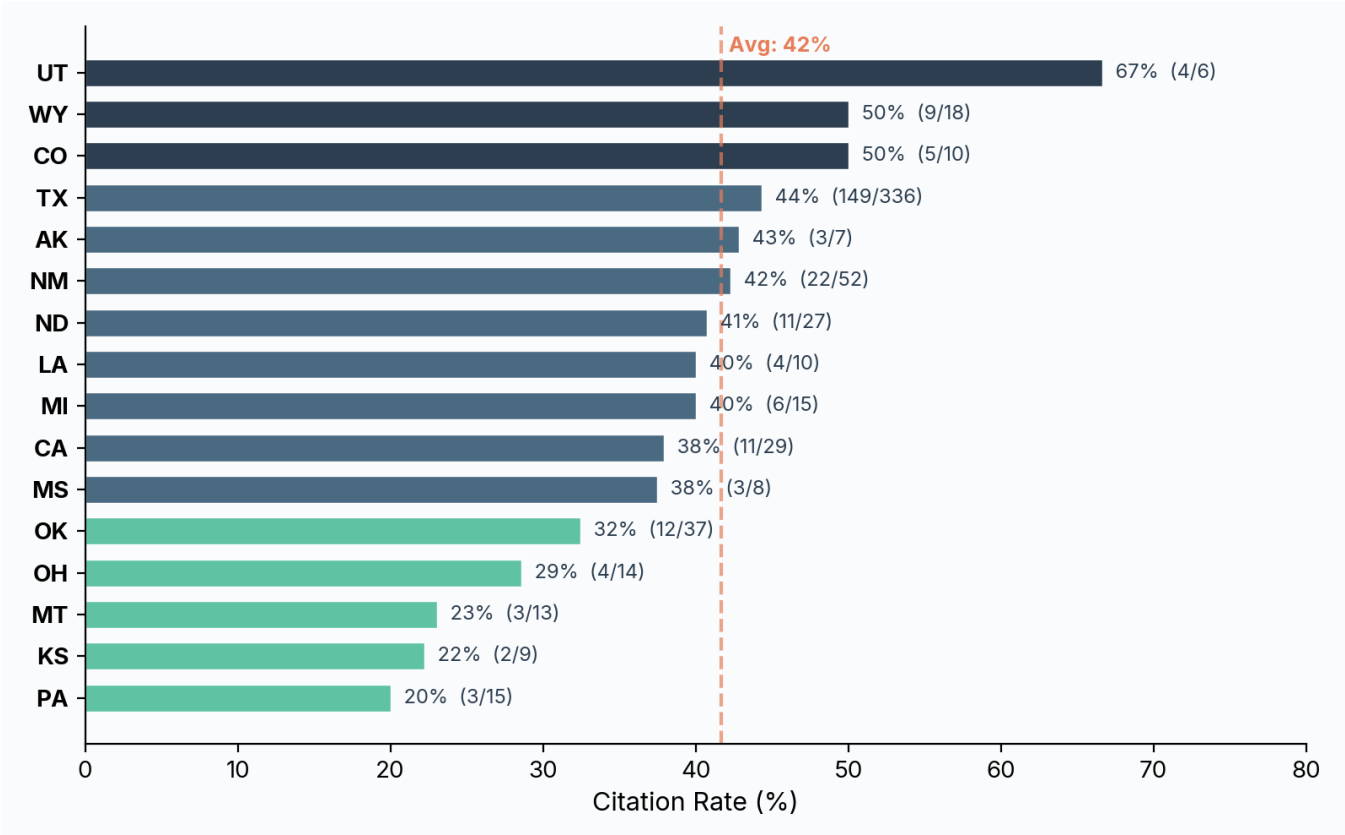
Raw inspection counts can be misleading. Texas accounts for 53% of all oil and gas inspections in our dataset, but it also employs **52% of the drilling and support workforce** (125,592 workers in NAICS 213111/213112, per [BLS QCEW data](#)). When normalized per 1,000 workers, Texas sits right at the national average of 2.6 inspections per 1,000 workers. The real outliers are elsewhere.

**Inspection Intensity.** Michigan (13.1 per 1,000 workers) and Montana (12.6) receive roughly **five times the inspection attention per worker** compared to the national average, likely reflecting targeted OSHA enforcement in smaller operations. Meanwhile, **Louisiana is dramatically under-inspected** at just 0.4 per 1,000 workers, despite employing 9.4% of the national drilling and support workforce.



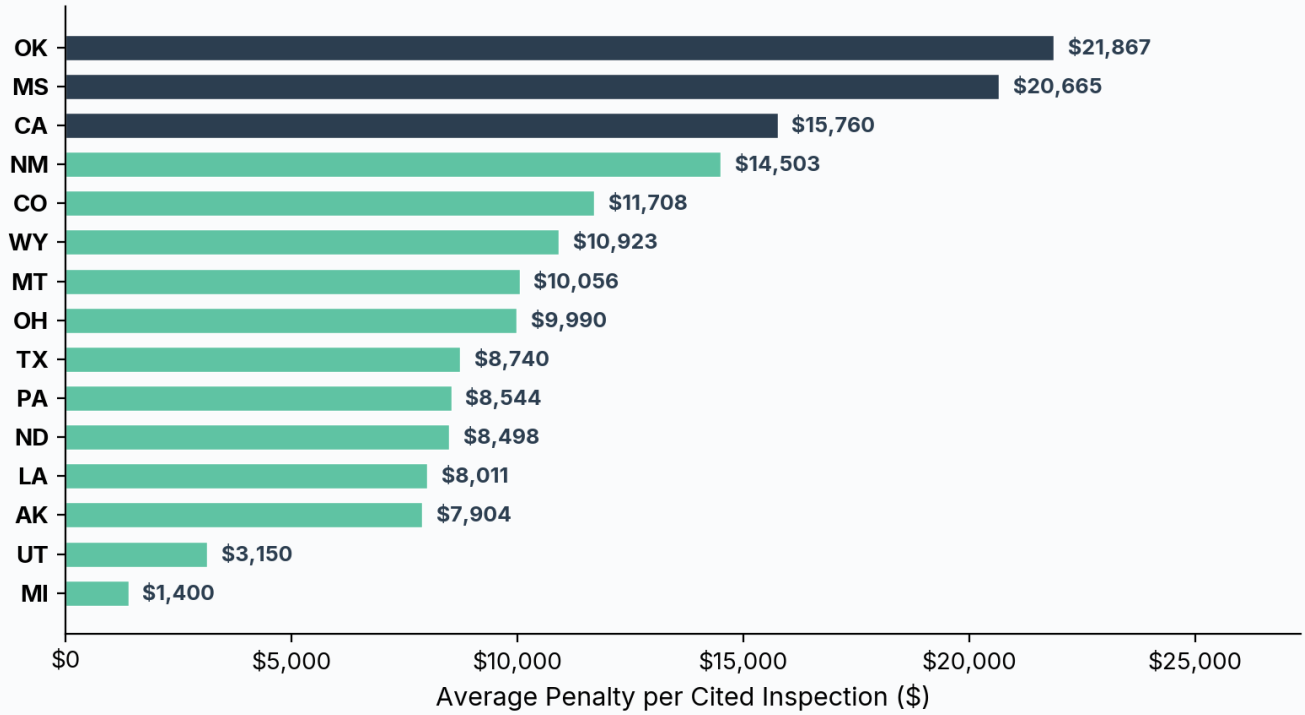
OSHA inspections per 1,000 drilling and support workers. Employment: BLS QCEW (NAICS 213111 + 213112). Inspection data: OSHA IMIS, Jan 2024 - Mar 2026.

**Citation Rates Reveal Compliance Gaps.** The metric that truly matters is not how many inspections occur, but how often they result in citations. Wyoming and Colorado both hit **50% citation rates**, well above the 42% national average. Pennsylvania sits at just 20%. These differences are not volume artifacts; they reflect genuine variation in compliance outcomes, enforcement posture, and operational conditions across basins.



Citation rate by state (states with 5+ inspections). Fraction shows cited inspections over total. Data: OSHA IMIS, Jan 2024 - Mar 2026.

**Penalty Severity Varies Widely.** When a citation does occur, the financial impact depends heavily on geography. Oklahoma averages **\$21,867 per cited inspection**, roughly 2.5 times the Texas average of \$8,740. Mississippi (\$20,665) and California (\$15,760) also carry significantly higher penalties per citation. These figures suggest that violations found in certain states tend to be more severe, or that local OSHA offices apply stricter penalty calculations.



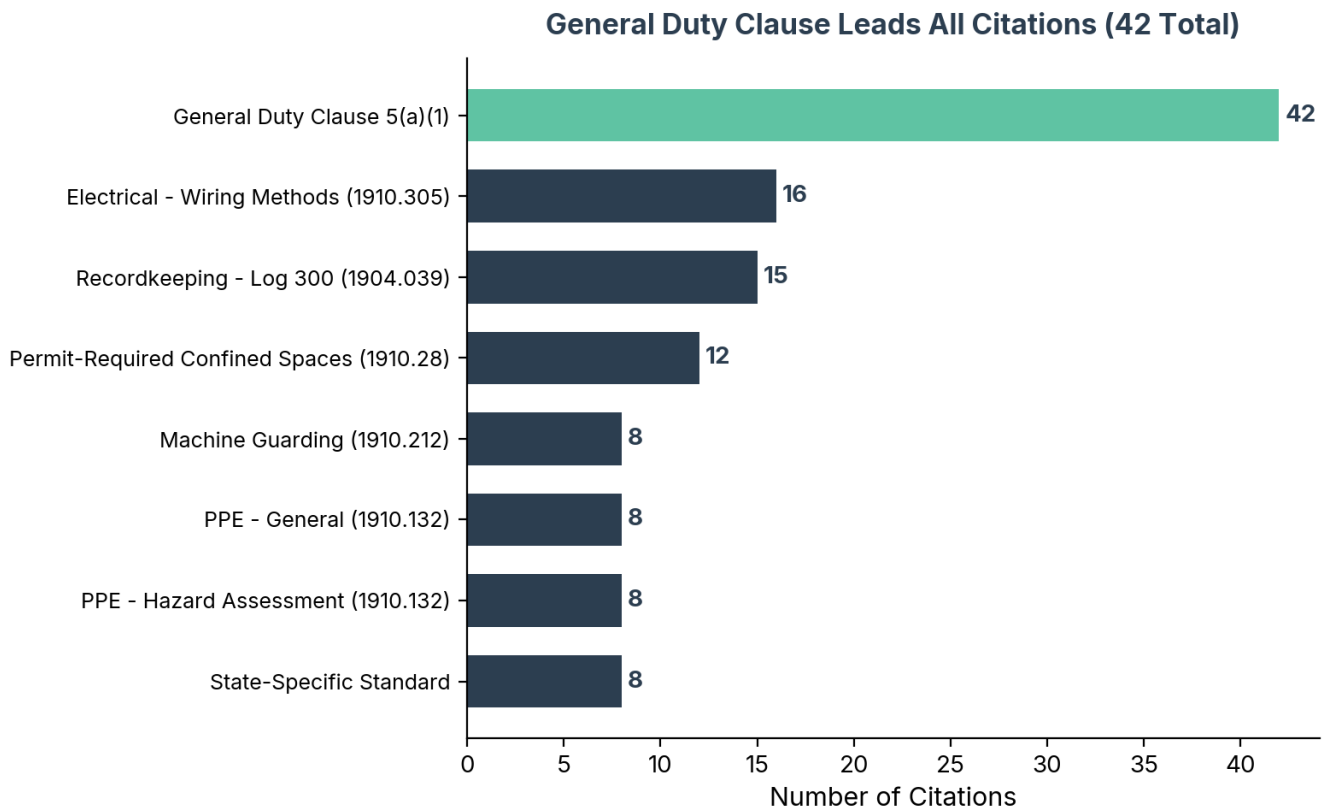
Average current penalty per cited inspection by state (states with 3+ cited inspections). Data: OSHA IMIS, Jan 2024 - Mar 2026.



An oil pump jack in the field. When normalized for workforce size, inspection patterns reveal a far more nuanced picture than raw counts suggest. Photo: Pexels (free license).

## 05 What OSHA Is Looking For

Understanding which standards OSHA cites most frequently is critical for any operator looking to proactively address compliance gaps before an inspector arrives.



*Most frequently cited OSHA standards across all oil and gas inspections, 2024–2026.*

### The General Duty Clause Problem

The **General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1)**, topped the list with **42 citations**, nearly three times the next most-cited standard. This is significant because the General Duty Clause is OSHA's catch-all: it applies when a recognized hazard exists but no specific OSHA standard covers it. In the oil and gas context, this often involves:

- Struck-by hazards from unsecured equipment or pipe handling
- Caught-in/between hazards during rig operations
- Exposure to hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) without adequate monitoring
- Inadequate energy isolation during well servicing

What this means for operators: If 42 companies were cited under the General Duty Clause, it means OSHA inspectors are finding hazards that fall outside the standard rulebook. Companies need comprehensive Job Safety Analyses (JSAs) and hazard assessments that go beyond simply checking boxes on regulatory checklists.

## Electrical and PPE: Persistent Blind Spots

**Electrical wiring violations (1910.304/305)** accounted for 55 combined citations across all sub-provisions, making electrical hazards the second-largest category. These are often found at temporary well sites where portable equipment, generators, and control panels may not meet permanent wiring standards. **PPE violations (1910.132)** appeared 22 times across all sub-provisions, indicating that companies continue to struggle with basic personal protective equipment requirements: proper hazard assessments, equipment selection, and ensuring workers actually wear what's provided.

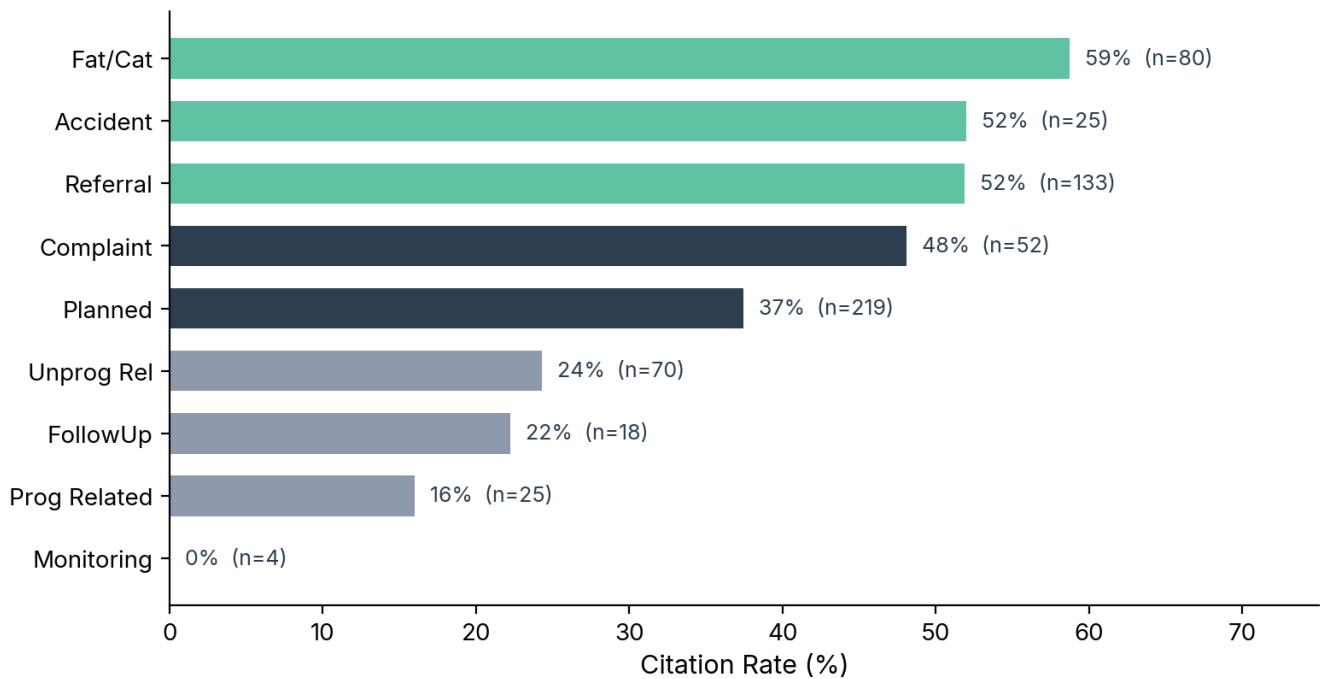
**Recordkeeping (1904.039)** rounded out the top cited standards with 18 citations across its sub-provisions. These involve failures to properly maintain OSHA 300 logs, which track workplace injuries and illnesses. Recordkeeping violations often signal broader safety management deficiencies.

## 06 Why OSHA Showed Up

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Not all inspections are created equal. The **reason OSHA initiates an inspection** has a significant impact on whether citations follow. Understanding these triggers helps operators assess their risk exposure.

### Fatality/Catastrophe Inspections Have Highest Citation Rate (59%)



Citation rates vary dramatically by inspection trigger type. Fatality/catastrophe inspections result in citations 59% of the time.

### Inspection Triggers at a Glance

Trigger	Count	Citation Rate	Significance
Fat/Cat	80	59%	Highest risk: triggered by death or hospitalization
Referral	133	52%	Another agency or inspection flagged a concern
Accident	25	52%	Workplace incident required OSHA reporting
Complaint	52	48%	Employee or public complaint filed
Planned	219	37%	Routine, programmed based on industry risk
Unprog Related	70	24%	Discovered during nearby inspection

80 Fatality/Catastrophe Inspections in roughly two years is a sobering number. Each one represents a worker who died or was severely injured. The 59% citation rate in these cases means that in the majority of fatal incidents, OSHA found the employer at fault for regulatory violations that may have contributed to the outcome.

## 07 Penalties: \$3.9M and Counting

OSHA assessed **\$3,877,706 in initial penalties** across all cited inspections, with current penalties (reflecting settlements and reductions) at **\$2,716,963**, a 30% overall reduction. While many employers successfully negotiate penalties downward, the financial exposure is substantial.

<b>\$3.88M</b>	<b>\$2.72M</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>231</b>
Initial Penalties	After Settlement	Average Reduction	Companies Penalized

### Penalties by Company Category

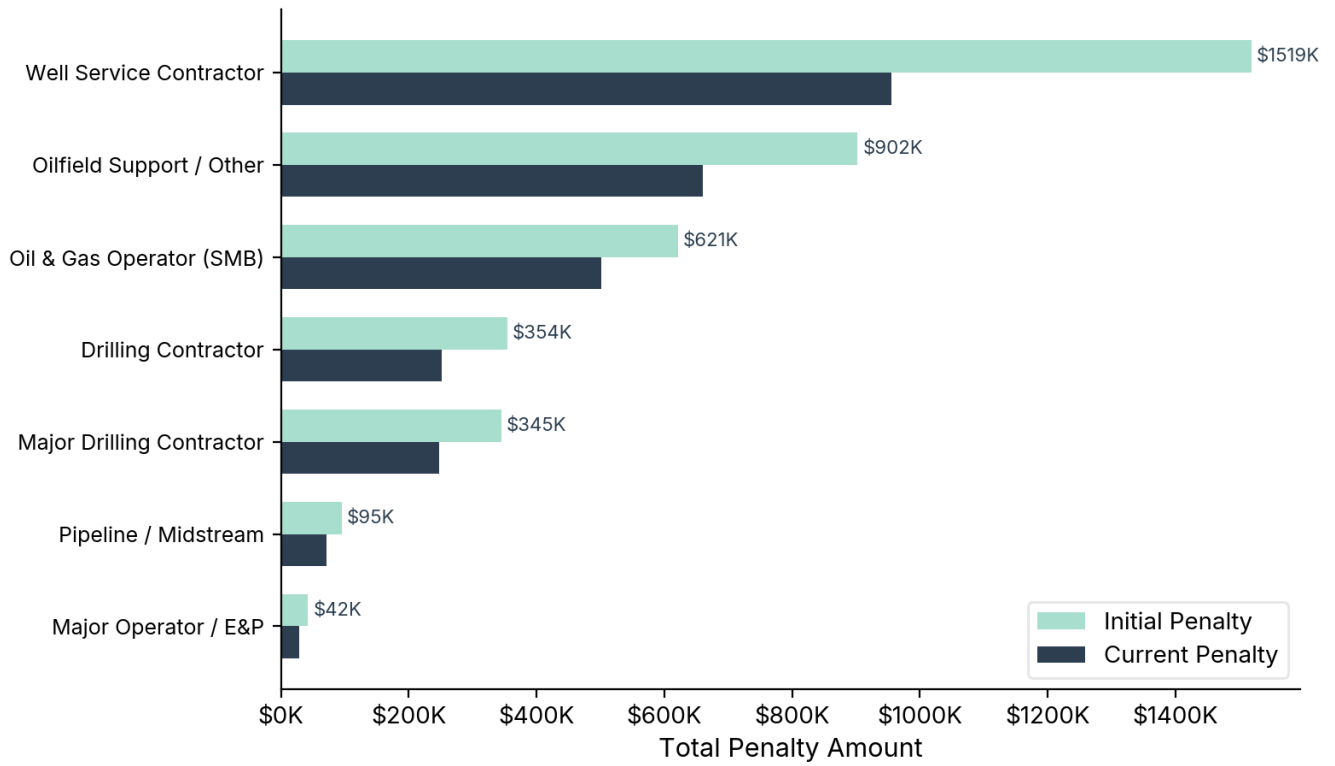
To understand where penalties concentrate across the upstream sector, we classified all 231 penalized companies into categories based on their business type, NAICS code, and operational profile.

Company Category	Companies Penalized	Total Initial Penalty	Avg. Penalty per Company
Well Service Contractors	87	\$1,518,695	\$17,456
Oilfield Support / Other	67	\$902,213	\$13,466
Oil & Gas Operators (SMB)	36	\$620,897	\$17,247
Drilling Contractors	23	\$353,884	\$15,386
Major Drilling Contractors	11	\$344,834	\$31,349
Pipeline / Midstream	3	\$94,872	\$31,624
Major Operators / E&P	4	\$42,311	\$10,578

**Well service contractors** account for the largest share of total penalties at \$1.52 million across 87 penalized companies, reflecting the high-risk nature of well servicing, completion, and workover operations. However, **major drilling contractors and pipeline/midstream operators face the highest average penalties** per company -- over \$31,000 each -- suggesting that when larger operators are cited, the violations tend to be more severe or carry multiple serious findings.

Notably, two Willful violations were issued across the entire dataset: one to a well service contractor and one to a small oil and gas operator. Willful penalties carry significantly higher fines and can expose companies to criminal liability in cases involving worker fatalities. The single largest individual penalty exceeded \$165,000 for a Willful violation in the well service category.

## Well Service Contractors Bear the Largest Share of Penalties



Total penalty amounts by company category. Well service contractors bear the largest cumulative burden.

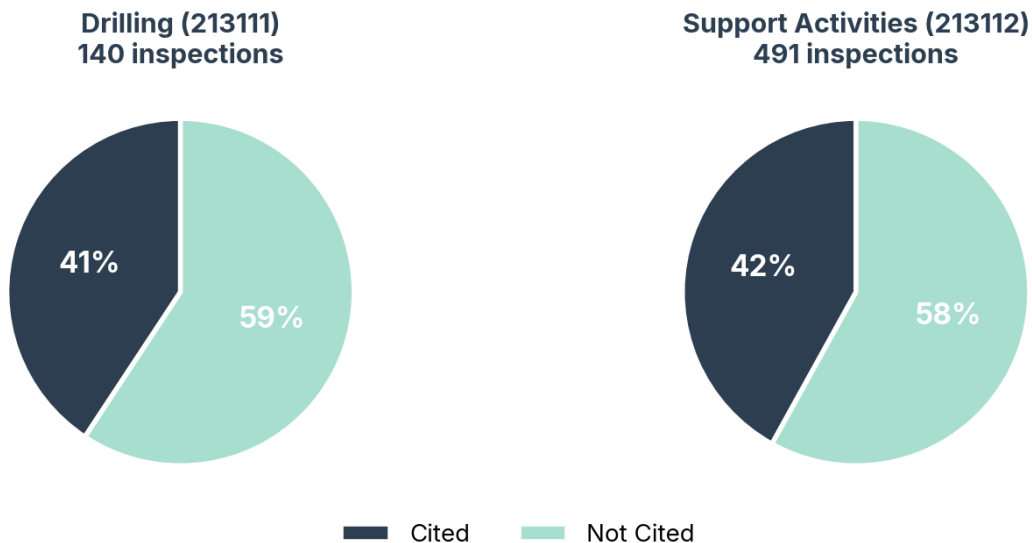
## 08 Drilling vs. Support Activities

The two NAICS codes analyzed represent distinct segments of the oil and gas upstream sector:

**213111 -- Drilling Oil and Gas Wells:** Companies primarily engaged in drilling oil and gas wells, including directional drilling, spudding in, and re-drilling. This segment accounted for **140 inspections (22%)** with a 41% citation rate.

**213112 -- Support Activities for Oil and Gas Operations:** Companies providing services such as well servicing, completion, workover, cementing, perforating, acidizing, and well testing. This larger segment saw **491 inspections (78%)** with a 42% citation rate.

### Similar Citation Rates Across Drilling & Support Activities

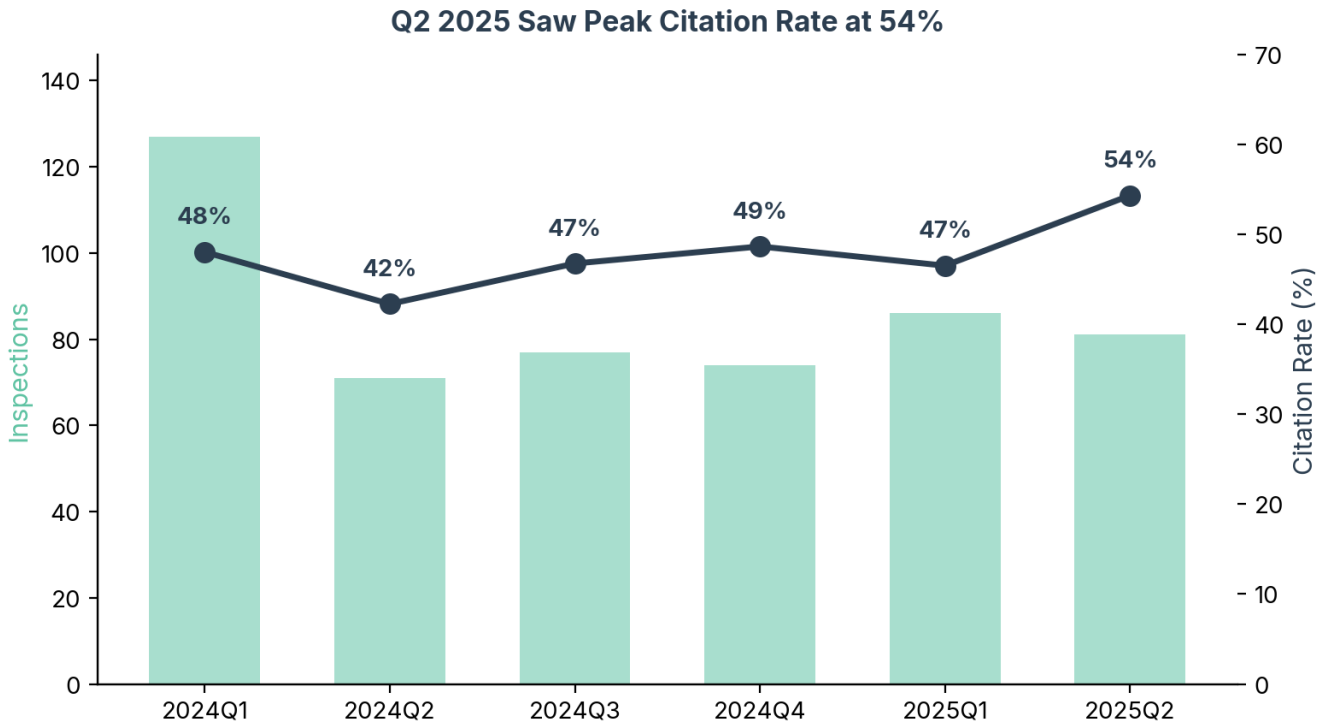


*Citation rates are nearly identical across drilling and support activities.*

The similarity in citation rates between drilling and support activities (41% vs. 42%) suggests that safety compliance challenges are systemic across the upstream sector, not concentrated in one type of operation. Both segments need equal attention to safety management.

## 09 Quarterly Trends

Analyzing OSHA inspection activity by quarter reveals patterns in enforcement intensity and citation outcomes.



Quarterly inspection volume and citation rates for completed cases (Q1 2024 through Q2 2025). Later quarters excluded due to open investigations.

**Q1 2024** saw the highest volume with 127 inspections, likely reflecting the start of OSHA's annual enforcement emphasis programs. **Q2 2025 recorded the peak citation rate at 54%**, suggesting heightened enforcement severity rather than increased inspection volume.

The apparent decline in citation rates in Q3-Q4 2025 and early 2026 should be interpreted with caution: many of these cases remain open investigations. As OSHA completes its review of these inspections, the citation rates for recent quarters will likely increase to align with historical averages.

Seasonal patterns matter: Q1 and Q2 consistently show higher inspection volumes, coinciding with the spring and summer drilling season when field activity peaks. Operators should anticipate increased OSHA presence during these periods and ensure their safety programs are at full readiness before the busy season begins.

# 10 Key Takeaways for Operators

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This data tells a clear story: OSHA is actively inspecting oil and gas operations, and the odds of receiving a citation are high. Here are the actionable insights every operator should consider:

## 1 Prepare for the General Duty Clause

With 42 citations, the General Duty Clause is OSHA's most-used tool in oil and gas. Go beyond regulatory checklists: conduct thorough hazard assessments and document every recognized hazard, even those without a specific OSHA standard.

## 2 Fix Your Electrical Compliance

Electrical wiring violations are the second-largest citation category. Temporary well sites are especially vulnerable. Ensure all portable equipment, generators, and control panels meet OSHA wiring standards (1910.304/305) before operations begin.

## 3 Invest in PPE Programs

22 PPE citations across the dataset reflect a persistent gap. Beyond providing equipment, ensure proper hazard assessments drive PPE selection, and enforce compliance in the field.

## 4 Take Recordkeeping Seriously

18 recordkeeping violations under 1904.039 suggest systemic issues with OSHA 300 log maintenance. Accurate recordkeeping is both a legal requirement and an early indicator of safety culture maturity.

## 5 Respond to Referrals and Complaints Proactively

Referral and complaint inspections carry citation rates above 50%. If you receive a complaint or know another agency has flagged concerns, treat it as an imminent inspection and self-audit immediately.

## 6 Budget for Penalties -- and Prevention

\$3.9M in penalties across the industry is significant, but the true cost includes business disruption, legal fees, increased insurance premiums, and reputational damage. Prevention is orders of magnitude cheaper.

# BasinCheck

Safety Audit Software for Oil & Gas Contractors

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The data in this report underscores a fundamental truth: **compliance isn't optional, and the cost of non-compliance is rising.**

**BasinCheck** helps oil and gas contractors stay ahead of OSHA enforcement through:

- ✓ Digital safety audit management: replace paper-based inspections
- ✓ Automated compliance tracking aligned with OSHA standards
- ✓ Real-time hazard identification and documentation
- ✓ Centralized recordkeeping that satisfies OSHA 300 log requirements
- ✓ Field-ready mobile interface built for drilling and service operations

## Learn more at [BasinCheck.com](https://BasinCheck.com)

Schedule a demo and see how proactive safety management can protect your crew and your bottom line.

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Data sourced from OSHA IMIS public inspection database ([osha.gov/ords/imis/industry.search](https://osha.gov/ords/imis/industry.search)). This report is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Companies should consult qualified safety professionals and legal counsel for specific compliance guidance. © 2026 BasinCheck. All rights reserved.