

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, March 24, 2010

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OSHA Assistant Secretary Joins Illinois Department of Labor to Recognize Illinois as OSHA State Plan

State announces new health and safety outreach program to enhance safety and health for one million public employees

CHICAGO—March 24, 2010. The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) welcomes U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Assistant Secretary Dr. David Michaels today to celebrate Illinois' approval as an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) State Plan. New federal funding will give Illinois added resources to protect more than one million public employees—including school teachers, state and local government employees, and employees in high-risk professions, such as police officers, firefighters and transportation workers.

“As Illinois faces unprecedented budget challenges, this new federal funding is critical to ensuring the health and safety of public workers across the state,” said Governor Pat Quinn. “It is vital to raise awareness about how to protect those who serve and protect all of us every day.”

USDOL Assistant Secretary Michaels will recognize Illinois as an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) State Plan. As a State Plan, Illinois will receive new federal resources to:

- Hire more enforcement inspectors to increase the frequency and number of inspections of public sector workplaces;
- Help reduce the number of work-related injuries and fatalities, particularly in high-risk professions such as transportation, firefighting, and law enforcement;
- Establish a separate consultation program to assist public sector employers in providing safe work environments, to prevent and avoid workplace injuries; and
- Increase awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace among public employees and employers.

“This new federal funding will allow us to enhance our program to make Illinois public workplaces safer,” said IDOL Director Catherine Shannon. “Illinois will now have additional resources to protect public employees from work-related injuries and illnesses and to educate public employers about maintaining safe and healthy workplaces—which will improve the overall quality of life for public service workers, and in turn, the communities they serve.”

The Illinois Department of Labor is also launching a *Workplace Safety and Health Outreach Campaign* to ensure public employers and employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities to maintain safe and healthy working conditions and environments for public employees.

The Department's Safety Inspection and Education Division will conduct workplace safety and health workshops throughout the state this year to inform public employers and employees about how Illinois' State Plan status will affect them, including increased inspection and enforcement efforts and more consultation and training services available to public employers.

After approving Illinois as a State Plan, OSHA awarded \$1.5 million in federal matching grants to the Illinois Department of Labor. OSHA currently provides similar funding to 26 other states for safety and health enforcement. The Occupational Safety and Health Act allows states and territories to establish plans that only cover state and local government employees -- workers who are excluded from federal OSHA coverage. Once a state plan is approved, OSHA funds up to 50% of the program's operating costs. Four states and territories in addition to Illinois regulate public sector health and safety--Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Virgin Islands. Private sector employees in Illinois remain under the jurisdiction of OSHA.

"For Illinois public employees, one million strong, this day and this state plan recognizes your value, respects your work, and says that the State of Illinois, along with your fellow citizens of Illinois and the federal government, will work to ensure that at the end of each work day you may return home to your families safe and healthy," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Dr. David Michaels. "I am proud and pleased to recognize Illinois for this outstanding accomplishment."

"Worker safety is an historic, core issue for labor unions," said Michael T. Carrigan, president of Illinois AFL-CIO. "For hundreds of years workers have fought for safe working conditions and laws designed to protect those rights. This new federal funding will go a long way to protect Illinois workers. Since 1989, on April 28, the AFL-CIO has honored those who have been injured or killed on the job during Workers' Memorial Day ceremonies around the state and country. This year we will celebrate the fact that Illinois has an OSHA State Plan in place and an outstanding Department of Labor to implement it."

"We couldn't have achieved this significant accomplishment without the leadership and support of Illinois' Congressional delegation, labor organizations, professional membership organizations and public employers, as well as the tireless efforts of IDOL and OSHA staff." said Director Shannon.

For more information about the Illinois State Plan, please refer to IDOL's website at: www.state.il.us/agency/dol.

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