

At a Glance: The Trump USDA's Proposed New Swine Slaughter Inspection System Will Greatly Endanger Meatpacking Workers

We deserve safe food and America's workers deserve safe workplaces. Yet the Trump administration has proposed a radical change in hog slaughter plants that will endanger public health, worker safety, and animal welfare. That's why NELP and a large coalition of consumer, worker, and animal welfare organizations are coming together to oppose the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) proposed rule to privatize and decrease food safety inspections in hog slaughter plants.

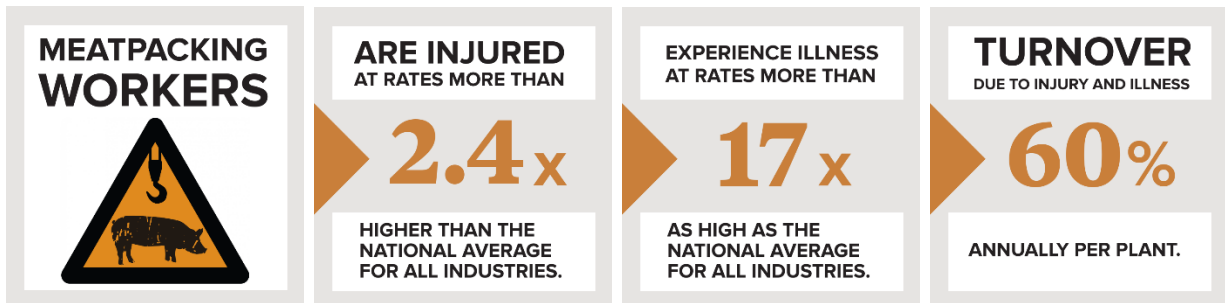
This new proposal also removes all limitations on line speeds in the plants, significantly increasing the risk to workers and consumers. USDA calculates the economic benefits of the proposal in terms of higher profit for pork processing companies. "Assuming establishments increase their line speeds by 12.49 percent and have a packer margin of \$4.10 per head, an average large establishment's surplus could increase by approximately \$2.04 million." (83 Fed. Reg. 4813). With the proposed rule, the Trump administration has decided to sacrifice worker and consumer safety and animal welfare in order to line the pockets of already rich corporate executives.

For the sake of keeping hard-working families and the pork we eat safe—[tell the USDA now](#) to reject any increase in line speed limits in swine slaughter plants and withdraw their proposal. The fact sheet below outlines some of the primary reasons why the proposed rule poses a grave threat to our country's tens of thousands of meatpacking workers.

The pork processing industry is one of the most dangerous industries for workers, and hog slaughter workers already endure exceedingly harsh working conditions to provide cheap meat to American consumers.

- Hog slaughter and processing workers work in cold, wet, noisy, and slippery conditions, making tens of thousands of forceful repetitive motions on each shift, processing a thousand hogs per hour at current speeds, and working with large and dangerous hooks, saws, and knives to cut and break down the hogs.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, meatpacking workers are injured at rates that are more than 2.4 times higher than the national average for all industries. The rate is nearly 3 times higher for those injuries that require workers to lose time from work or restrict their duties.
- Meatpacking workers experience an illness rate—such as for disorders like carpal tunnel syndrome—that is almost 17 times as high as the average for all other industries.

- The high injury and illness rates in meatpacking plants contribute to staggering worker turnover running at 60 percent annually per plant.



The proposed swine slaughter rule removes all limitations on line speeds in hog slaughter plants, despite the fact that evidence shows that any increase in line speeds will result in an already dangerous industry becoming more dangerous.

- Study after study confirms that fast line speeds already lead to high rates of serious workplace injuries in hog slaughter plants.
- As the director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health [explained](#) to FSIS recently, processing line speeds are a key cause of musculoskeletal disorders among food processing workers.
- Almost 30 years ago, OSHA published [Ergonomics Program Management Guidelines](#) for the meatpacking industry to address the high rates of carpal tunnel syndrome and other musculoskeletal disorders in the meatpacking industry (hog and cattle). The guidelines made clear that the high injury rates are due to high production rates in pork and cattle plants (e.g., already high line speeds).
- The OSHA recommendations that were made over 30 years ago remain the same today, but the new USDA proposal ignores these recommendations and the science they are based on, and gives a green light to pork plants to speed up the lines, which will lead to a devastating increase in injuries.

TAKE ACTION:

The USDA has drafted a rule that would increase profits in the industry by sacrificing the health and safety of tens of thousands of our nation’s workers and the safety of our food.

For the sake of public health, worker safety, and animal welfare, [let USDA know](#) they must reject any increase to line speeds in hog slaughter plants.

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