

## OSHA Turns Thirty!!!

On December 29, 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed *The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*. From this date to the present OSHA has become the governing body of workplace safety and health standards. When OSHA first opened in April of 1971, it covered 56 million workers at 3.5 million workplaces. This has increased to over 105 million workers and employees at 6.9 million sites governed by OSHA's Standards at this time, including your facility!

This Act established the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (**OSHA**) to set and enforce workplace safety and health standards. This "Safety Bill of Rights" has evolved from publishing a group of standards that included fire safety and exposure limits, *it's first original standard that limited worker exposure to asbestos*, to a new performance-oriented approach-setting specific goals for worker safety and health.

Some of the highlights, or important changes (whatever one might call them), include the decision in 1971 to employ an enforcement strategy, changing the manner in which employer's thought of safety prevention in the workplace. With fines for violations rising from \$100s in the 1970s to \$70,000 today for willful and repeated violations, employers and organizations are smart take the proper steps necessary to ensure worker safety!

In the 1980s OSHA introduced standards mandating employee access to medical and exposure records maintained by the employer. Of course many more changes took place within existing standards, as they continue to do today, and such issues as fire prevention and electrical safety became more prominent as advances in technology and it's "machines" began to rule worksites. OSHA also refined its inspection targets to the more hazardous industries. Construction, that means you!

Since OSHA allows states to develop their own "state OSHA", 25 states had their own OSHA in 1990 and were regulating themselves from within, as we do currently in Minnesota. This allows states to incorporate these national standards to whatever industry that is prominent within the state, showing OSHA's flexibility for safety rules and regulations. (What do you mean, yeah right!?)

Within the last decade OSHA made more significant changes that affect each of us on a daily basis. The "New OSHA" focused on results, making for a more straightforward approach to standard setting and a more targeting inspection program. The Bloodborne Standard in 1991 addressing biological hazards brought issues such as AIDS and Hepatitis into everyday practice at our workplaces. New Construction and Laboratory standards have been amended, as well as guidelines for preventing workplace violence. As a result the Employee Right-To-Know and A Workplace Accident and Incident Report standards have become everyone's favorite!

"Since OSHA's establishment in 1971, workplace fatalities have been cut by 60 %, and occupational injury and illness rates, by 40 %. At the same time, U.S. employment has nearly doubled from 56 million workers at 3.5 million worksites to 105 million workers at nearly 6.9 million sites." ([www.osha.gov/as/opa.html](http://www.osha.gov/as/opa.html)).

Since it's inception OSHA has had quite an impact on workplace safety, and shows no signs of straying from it's commitment toward comprehensive safety compliance. We at SafeAssure would like to commend each of you for your commitment these guidelines. Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday OSHA!