

OSHA Inspections

The last five years have seen numerous changes within OSHA's Standards/Statutes. One of the areas in which they have been consistent is with Workplace Inspections. Two of the most frequently asked questions SafeAssure hears are **What should we do if OSHA shows up at our organization?** and **What can we expect during an inspection?** SafeAssure consultants have had a chance to walk with OSHA during many of these inspections and feel it is important that each client understand the inspection process. Here are some answers.

WHAT TO DO PRIOR TO AN OSHA INSPECTION

- **Notify all department heads and affected personnel of inspection**– It is important to make sure all the affected employees understand that during an inspection OSHA will “consult with a reasonable number of employees concerning safety and health matters in the workplace” (OSHA).
- **Contact SafeAssure Consultants**– As I will describe later in the article, OSHA's inspection process sets out to evaluate all aspects of a safety program. Since it becomes hard to ensure that all affected personnel are available, SafeAssure can be a valuable resource for information in safety procedures, programs and documentation.

*note: When an investigator arrives at your organization, make sure that he/she provides designated personnel with proper credentials.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN INSPECTION

OSHA has five different inspection priorities including imminent danger, fatal accidents and catastrophes, employee complaints, programmed inspections, and follow-up inspections. Each of these inspections is performed in a similar manner.

The inspection process is as follows:

- **Opening Conference**– The investigator will provide affected personnel “the purpose of the investigation and its intended scope of coverage” (OSHA). This meeting will determine who will escort the inspector during the walkaround.
- **Review of Postings and Recordkeeping Requirements**– Workplace posters, injury and illness records (OSHA 200 & 300 Logs), and written workplace safety and health programs will be reviewed. MSDS sheets & Right-To-Know training documents are considered written safety and health documents and will be reviewed.
- **Walk Through Inspection**– The route and extent of the inspection will be determined by the investigator. During the inspection the OSHA investigator will “observe safety and health conditions and practices” (OSHA). He/she will discuss any unsafe or unhealthy working condition that is found with the employer. The inspector will give corrective methods and in certain cases *immediate correction* may be possible. This doesn't mean they won't cite an organization for the violation though!
- **Closing Conference**– To conclude the inspection the investigator will conduct a meeting with the employer and authorized personnel to discuss all findings and observations made during the walkthrough. The violations will be interpreted and the basis for assessing penalties will be explained. Time allowed to correct all violations (abatement time) will be discussed. The employer is also informed about contesting violations and extending abatement times.

An official report will be given to the organization describing citations, penalties and abatement times to complete the inspection.

SafeAssure hopes this gives each client a better idea of how the infamous OSHA Inspection works. We will continue to bring each of you the necessary changes to ensure that you are kept safe and brought into compliance. Work safely!!!

Quotes reference to: www.doli.state.mn.us/oshinsp.html