

Understanding OSHA

OSHA stands for Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The main objective of this Federal organization is to enforce rules and regulations related to safety of workers at worksites. It is an enforcement wing of Department of Labor (DOL) and oversees inspection of worksites to check for hazards, offers advice to the employers how to remove them, educate the workers to follow the right safety procedures to eliminate or reduce the risks, and check the locations or worksites that have not been inspected.

To enforce safety norms, OSHA employs inspectors, technical experts, standard writers and compliance investigators, who are highly trained professionals and experts in their fields. The inspectors have the right to inspect any worksite at random in an appropriate manner and time. They have the right to question an employer or employee to know about the true facts of the work environment of the site.

Hazardous places or worksites are given the inspection priority because of very higher incidence of accidents, illness and the resultant fatalities. The inspector takes a tour of the site and if they find that the working conditions are not as per regulations then the employer can be either warned or fined. For willful violation of law, stricter penalties are imposed.

There are different activities that OSHA undertakes:

- Provides assistance to the employers to make the worksites safer.
- Encourages employees to follow the safety rules through various programs.
- Targets workplaces that have the most numbers of accidents and illness.
- Takes regulatory actions against defaulters for violations.
- Creates partnerships with workers and employers to improve onsite safety.
- Maintains records of all the workplaces inspected and provides the employees, information pertaining to the safety standards of their workplace.

The enforcement agency uses its' vast infrastructure and resources to keep track on the various work sites and punish the offenders through fines and imprisonment. At the same time it educates employers and employees through various programs on how to create a safe work environment and protect precious lives from various hazards.

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