



Laundry List: Check it Twice for Safety in IL

News

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The article, “Laundry List: Check it Twice for Safety in IL,” featured in *The Advantage*, discussed the importance of safety within the laundry industry.

Ed Foulke shed light on pressing issues for laundries.

Perennially among OSHA’s top five when it comes to violations cited in industrial laundries, lockout/tagout topped Ed’s list.

“I find quite often in the laundry industry that lockout/tagout procedures aren’t very clear,” said Ed. “Or a given laundry didn’t have a procedure for a particular machine, or they haven’t done the periodic inspection.”

“Once a year, as a matter of standard operating procedure, laundries need to inspect all of their lockout/tagout equipment and do an internal review of what processes are in place. Then, all of this should be reviewed with all employees. Finally, document and certify that all steps in this process have been completed. That last step is important: Make sure to have everything in writing, and keep these records on file. This kind of due diligence is going to be your best defense in the event of an inspection.”

Among the hazards for which laundries are continually prone to citation, Ed highlighted fall protection, and bloodborne pathogen exposure control as areas to watch for forthcoming regulation updates.

“I signed off on a walking/working surfaces package when I was head of OSHA, and my judgement is that this package is about to come out,” said Ed. “You’ll see that, as a whole, it includes more regulation on fall protection, so that’s an issue that will take increasing prevalence in the near future.”

“Another thing I’d highlight relates to those laundries dealing with materials that may contain blood-borne pathogens. It’s critically important to have an exposure control policy in place and to train and retrain employees on avoidance as well as on appropriately containing the potential harm done by an accidental exposure,” he said. “Additionally, as of 2011, it’s mandatory to offer Hepatitis B Vaccines for any workers who may come into contact with these materials. Employees have the right to

decline the vaccine, but if they decline, the employer needs to make sure a declination form includes the standard OSHA verbiage for this situation is signed and kept on file.”

Ed also highlighted reporting and recordkeeping Rule, and even though it went into effect January 1 of last year, it’s surprising how many companies don’t know about these new regulations,” Ed said. “Also, OSHA Form 300A, the Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses, must be posted in the workplace every year from February 1 to April 30.

Naturally, all these regulations are in place to prevent exposure of employees to health and wellness risks that can potentially be catastrophic not only for them but for the business. Economic loss comes in the form of stoppage time, interrupted workflow, and potential criminal and/or civil liability, including penalties.

“Of course, the ‘stick’ to the issue of compliance is penalties, and a big change passes as park of the Bipartisan Budget Act of November 2015,” Ed added. “Penalties are increasing by upwards of 70%, which is obviously quite a leap, so it clearly pays to do your research and stay up-to-date.”

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