

Government Audits: What Do They Want?

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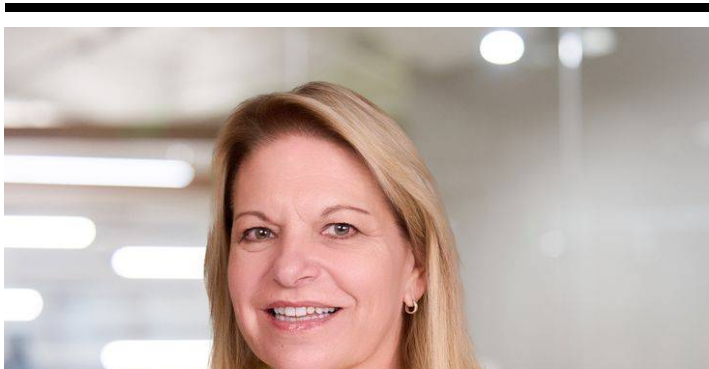
During the past two years, the federal government and many state governments have changed their focus from compliance assistance to enforcement. Gone are the days of federal government outreach, education and compliance assistance to employers. As a result, the risk of government investigations and inspections, large penalties and the possibility of criminal sanctions have increased substantially for employers. Even more disturbing for hospitality employers is the focus by these federal and state agencies on the hotel industry.

Several federal agencies have specifically targeted the hospitality industry, and other agencies have implemented aggressive enforcement efforts against employers across the board. Both the United States Department of Labor and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement have stepped up enforcement efforts in the hospitality industry specifically. The Department of Homeland Security also has made it clear that its priority has shifted from compliance assistance to enforcement. Another agency beefing up enforcement efforts is the DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

These enforcement priorities, especially those aimed at the hospitality industry, make it imperative that employers focus on prevention and prepare for the government's likely audit. Arbitrary and unexpected government audits are a significant drain on the time and resources of businesses of all sizes. Small businesses will have to dedicate their limited resources to the audit process. Large businesses will utilize their resources as well and on a larger scale might face expanded audits covering all employees and departments as well as related or ancillary businesses.

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