

# The Cult of Personality? Decline in OSHA Inspectors under President Trump

Insights

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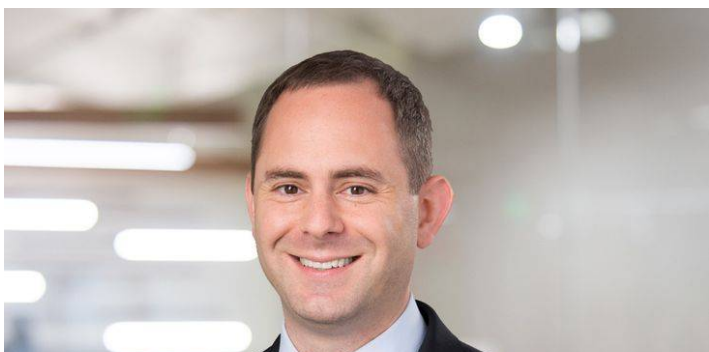
Every presidential administration has its priorities, and President Trump's is no different. President Trump has put his stamp on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by stalling, delaying, or modifying Obama Administration policies (think the anti-retaliation rule and the e-file accident report regulation).

President Trump's deregulatory agenda also has impacted OSHA's staff. As reported in *Politico*, the number of inspectors working for OSHA decreased this past year, resulting in the fewest inspectors in the agency's history. As of April 2019, OSHA employed 870 inspectors nationally, including area directors, who generally do not conduct inspections themselves. This number is down from a high of 1,059 during part of the Obama Administration. Additionally, while the number of OSHA inspections rose the past two fiscal years, the number of complex inspections has decreased.

OSHA's diminished headcount has three likely repercussions. First, as noted, companies are less likely to be subject to complex or prolonged inspections (although they will still occur in some cases). Second, because OSHA inspectors are stretched thin, OSHA may be less inclined to conduct an inspection based upon a report of an accident or injury or a complaint, unless a major safety hazard is present. Finally, if OSHA does decide to conduct an inspection, its inspection may be cursory. A cursory inspection does not mean that an employer is less likely to be cited for a violation, however; rather, the citations are more likely to be unfounded.

Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta has requested funds for 30 more inspectors for fiscal year 2020. We'll have to wait and see if that happens.

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