



UPDATES FROM EHS TODAY'S SAFETY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Insights
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With multiple tracks yesterday, I can only write about a few sessions. I'll focus on topics related to OSHA's priorities and plans as discussed in the sessions dealing with Federal and State OSHA Plan Updates and "OSHA is Serious About Using 5(a)(1) Citations," which I moderated.

Kurt Petermeyer, the OSHA Region IV Administrator and South Carolina OSHA's Harvey Jessup spoke candidly about OSHA's priorities and their challenges in effectively applying OSHA's limited resources. Regardless of your political perspective, OSHA needs more resources, but until that day, they engage in a triage effort. As a management side lawyer, I need to know where OSHA is applying its resources in order to encourage employers to address these areas.

Region IV Administrator Petermeyer confirmed OSHA's public statements that in fiscal year 2016 they are emphasizing:

- Ergonomics
- Workplace Violence
- Chemical Exposure
- Heat Stress
- Safety & Security of Chemical Facilities
- Increased Media Presence
- Criminal Prosecution

Ergonomics

Note that priorities 1 and 2 are Ergonomics and Workplace Violence. OSHA has been building their foundation to begin regularly issuing 5(a)(1) "general duty" citations on ergonomic, workplace violence, and heat stress even though no vertical standard exists. The only reason we are not already seeing more 5(a)(1) items in these areas is OSHA's lack of personnel and the deluge of reports of amputations and hospitalizations since the July 2015 reporting requirements took effect.

Region IV just announced their Poultry Processing Emphasis Program, and are close to completing their proposed Warehouse Emphasis Program. Both Emphasis Programs will analyze ergonomic issues

issues.

Target Groups

You are even more likely to be inspected if you fall into certain “Target Groups,” involving:

- Youth;
- “Immigrant and vulnerable workers”;
- Temporary and “misclassified” workers, and
- Small business.

Consider the broad meaning of the terms, immigrant and “vulnerable” workers. Tie in this description to an emphasis on temporary and “misclassified” workers, and you can easily see certain industries in the crosshairs.

Note also the emphasis on “small business.” I have long been concerned that many small employers wrongly assume that their safety and OSHA compliance is good simply because they have never been inspected. OSHA head Dr. Michaels recently expressed his satisfaction that the new reporting requirements have “gotten OSHA into businesses that they have never before visited.” Never assume that you are too small or too big to be inspected.

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Related People



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