



Southeastern Auto Industry In OSHA's Sights?

Insights

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Southeastern auto parts manufacturers need to stay on their toes. OSHA Region IV just announced \$68,000 in citations against an Alabama metal stamping company that supplies oil pans, covers and parts for the auto industry. OSHA's official press release emphasizes that the inspection was initiated as part of Region IV's Emphasis Program for Safety Hazards in the Auto Parts Industry. We have discussed this Emphasis Program before and recommend that you check our [March 28 Post](#).

There are several lessons to be learned from this latest OSHA citation.

- OSHA Area Offices in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi are serious about inspecting companies supplying materials to regional auto manufacturing facilities.
- The Region has stated that they have been frustrated by a perceived lack of compliance efforts in this industry, and it is important that the industry regain OSHA's confidence.
- Many of the facilities are foreign owned and an international company may not be familiar with OSHA's requirements and enforcement process. OSHA's process is less collaborative and more punitive than manufacturers may have encountered in EU countries or in Asian markets.
- Many of these plants are relatively new and may not yet have established effective safety processes and a proactive safety culture. Also, employers should not rely upon the OEMs who fabricated and installed assembly lines and equipment to ensure OSHA compliance.
- The \$68,000 in penalties are the least costly aspect of the recent OSHA citation. Although OSHA uses inflammatory language to describe the violations, these are "routine" lockout, guarding, and electrical requirements. They could happen to anyone. Now, all of this company's plants are exposed to repeat OSHA citations for five years if a similar violation occurs at other facilities.
- OSHA issued 12 serious violations for allegedly exposing workers to crushing and struck-by hazards by not anchoring storage racks to the floor, for failing to protect employees from amputations with proper guards, inadequate start-up or lock out procedures, not training workers about occupational noise hazards, exposing workers to Arc flash hazards by not ensuring unused circuit breaker openings were closed, failure to evaluate forklift operators every three years and not posting a copy of the workplace noise standard in a place visible to employees.

I appreciate the numerous new companies locating in our Region to serve as the auto manufacturing Industry. I especially appreciate the influx of Japanese. Korean. German. and other internationally

based companies. Hopefully, this industry will be able to establish cooperative efforts with OSHA's Regional Administration and move forward. I have no doubt that the employers hope to do so.

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