Protecting Whistleblowers

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Human Resource Executive Online quoted Ed Foulke in the November 17 article "Protecting Whistleblowers." The article reported that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration updated its whistleblower investigation manual and has budgeted $6.1 million for another 45 investigators in 2012. The administration has made whistleblower protection an OSHA priority - something that some employers worry is making it more expensive and difficult for them to defend against charges of retaliation. Ed, who once ran OSHA, said that employees who have filed a complaint must be treated properly by their employers. "If someone makes a complaint or is involved in investigations, ... these employees have protection. Make sure when doing adverse action against them, have your ducks in a row. ... You've got to realize they have rights and have an administration very interested in supporting those rights." He added that, just because there are a low number of successful complaints, that "doesn't mean the rules are stacked" against whistleblowers. "I handle a lot of whistleblower investigations," he says. "I think the investigators do a very thorough job on investigations. ...There is a burden of proof."

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