

Be prepared for an OSHA inspection

Q. As a small business, what do we need to know about OSHA?

A number of businesses are likely to find themselves face-to-face with an Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspector, and many will be caught off-guard. Businesses should take a two-front approach to OSHA compliance.

First, make every effort to comply with OSHA's rules. Second, be prepared for an OSHA inspection. If you have a plan in place that provides guidance to your managers, and describes the procedures employed by OSHA and what to expect during an inspection, you can minimize disruption of your business and possible adverse consequences.

In most cases, for OSHA to enter your facility and perform an inspection it must obtain either your consent or a valid warrant author-

Checklist

Here are some tips to protect your interests during an inspection from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

- Check the inspector's identification
- Escort the inspector through the inspection
- Answer all questions truthfully
- Don't punish employees who cooperate with OSHA
- Don't interfere with the inspection

izing the inspection. The decision to allow the inspection is best made as a matter of company policy developed prior to an inspection.

OSHA will continue the investigation until it is completed, which could be days or months, depending on its scope. Inspectors are authorized to use various investigatory techniques, including observing employee activities, conducting

employee interviews and taking photographs.

Unless your establishment is in full compliance with OSHA's standards, you should expect to receive a citation. Any decision to challenge the citation has to be made based on the facts and other considerations.

By being proactive, you can minimize the impact of an OSHA in-

spection. By establishing safety and health programs that incorporate methods to communicate safety and health issues among personnel; implementing training programs; and identifying and controlling workplace hazards, you can keep your facility in compliance.

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