

## Workplace Safety

# The Importance of a Clean, Hygienic Construction Site



**R**EQUIRING GOOD housekeeping and hygiene in your construction sites can improve your overall workplace safety.

A workplace hygiene policy can encourage good housekeeping, and provides workers with clean drinking water, sanitary restrooms, and washing facilities to clean up. These practices reduce the chances of cross-contamination to safeguard everyone's health and safety.

### Housekeeping

Stray equipment and tools are a tripping danger. If you have a policy that the workplace must be tidy and all equipment and tools stowed after use, you can reduce the chances of accidents.

### Worker housekeeping duties

- Clean the jobsite after major tasks, or at least daily.
- Ensure there is no build-up of hazardous, flammable or combustible materials.
- Stack scrap lumber out of the way and remove protruding nails.
- Keep walkways, stairs and work areas clear.
- Make sure that walking surfaces are as level as possible.

### Drinking water

Provide clean drinking water via plumbed drinking fountains or with clean containers.

Make sure that potable water containers are clearly labeled and have drinking fountain spouts or faucets that can be used to fill single-use water cups. Remember: Water should not be dipped from the container repeatedly with the same cup.

Clearly label any non-potable water as unsafe for drinking, washing or cooking.

### Bathroom facilities

OSHA requires that you have separate bathroom facilities for every 20 employees (or fewer) of each sex on a jobsite. For example, if there are 30 men and 10 women, three bathrooms are required. The bathrooms may contain a toilet and urinal, but half of them must have a toilet.

If there are fewer than five employees on a jobsite, separate restrooms for each sex are not required if they can be locked.

Bathrooms should be private and in good working order with an adequate supply of toilet paper. Inspect and clean them daily.

See 'Conditions' on page 2

**Workers' Comp**

# Five Tips for Streamlining Your Insurance Policy Audit

**A**RE YOU due for a workers' compensation premium audit? Audits are how insurance rates are determined, and it's possible that an audit will uncover information that can actually save you money.

Additionally, audits are important to make sure that your employee counts and their job descriptions haven't changed, so that the premium can accurately reflect your current operations and risks.

The audit can be stressful, but the key is preparation. These five tips can help you get ready:

**Tell your broker when there are changes in your staffing, payroll or areas of operation** – This is important not just at audit time, but all the time.

Your rates are based on variable rating information, including the number of employees, job classifications, and the states in which you operate. Updated information results in more accurate premium assessments.

**Get your records ready** – Your auditor will need to see records such as federal and state tax returns, ledgers, checkbooks, contracts, and employee or contractor tax documents.

If you prepare your records in advance, you'll speed up the audit process.

**Break out various types of compensation** – For example, to set your premium, your broker considers pay but not contributions to employee benefits packages and other perks, so it's important to make sure your records are clear on the various types of compensation.

Also make sure overtime pay is clearly defined, since it's classified as regular pay for workers' comp insurance purposes.

**Ensure that contractors have their own insurance** – This is important from an audit standpoint, and also from a liability perspective. If an uninsured contractor has an accident while

working on your behalf, you can be held liable.

If an audit identifies contractors for whom you don't have certificates of coverage, you can be charged for their premiums.

**Remain on hand to answer questions** – The auditor may have questions or need more information. If you are available to provide answers, your audit will be completed more quickly.

By following these tips, you'll be more prepared for your workers' compensation premium audit.

A fast, efficient audit process can save time for both you and your auditor, so it pays to be prepared. ❖



*Continued from page 1*

## Workers Should Report Unsanitary Conditions

### Washing facilities

Make sure that you have facilities for your workers to wash their hands. Workers can wash away harmful substances and use the washing area to service and decontaminate personal protective equipment.

Having a washing station helps your workers avoid cross-contamination before eating, drinking, smoking or heading home for the day. It also helps them avoid getting sick later by eating with the same hands that may have been exposed to a hazardous substance.

One washing station is required for every 20 (or fewer) employees on a jobsite by OSHA. Wash areas should be clean with a good supply of water and soap, other skin cleansing agents, or special hazardous substance cleansing compounds. OSHA requires single-use drying towels or a warm-air hand dryer.

Washing facilities must be located outside of the portable

toilet, but close to bathroom facilities.

On jobsites with fewer than five employees and only one portable toilet facility, the washing facility may be located inside the portable toilet station.

### The takeaway

- Make sure all of your workers understand that it is their duty to help ensure good hygiene.
- Urge them to immediately report unsanitary or hazardous conditions to their supervisor.
- Urge them to keep the worksite tidy, by cleaning as they go and keeping the site clear of debris, trash and hazardous substances.
- Urge them to use washing facilities to clean their hands and avoid cross-contamination to ensure a healthy work environment for all. ❖

**Workplace Safety**

# Ca/OSHA COVID-19 Inspections Pick Up Steam

**A**FTER ISSUING emergency regulations in November, Cal/OSHA began to step up its enforcement of COVID-19 protections in California workplaces.

The types of business being cited cut across many sectors. Although most are focused on health care settings, the inspections are also sweeping up retailers, restaurants, fitness centers, agricultural operations, food processing and other manufacturing settings.

Since Nov. 30, 2020, when it issued the emergency COVID-19 workplace prevent regulations, Cal/OSHA has issued citations to more than 109 employers, with total proposed penalties of more than \$2.8 million.

Since the new regs were implemented, most employers were

cited for multiple COVID-19-related infractions.

But Cal/OSHA started inspecting workplaces before those rules were in effect. It's first inspections were conducted in May 2020 and since then, it has issued \$4.4 million worth of proposed penalties in total.

## Most common citations

- Failing to effectively establish, implement and maintain procedures to correct unhealthy conditions related to COVID-19 that affected a business's employees.
- Failing to notify Cal/OSHA of a COVID-19 fatality.
- Failing to create a proper safety program.

## WHAT'S PROMPTING INSPECTIONS

### A complaint

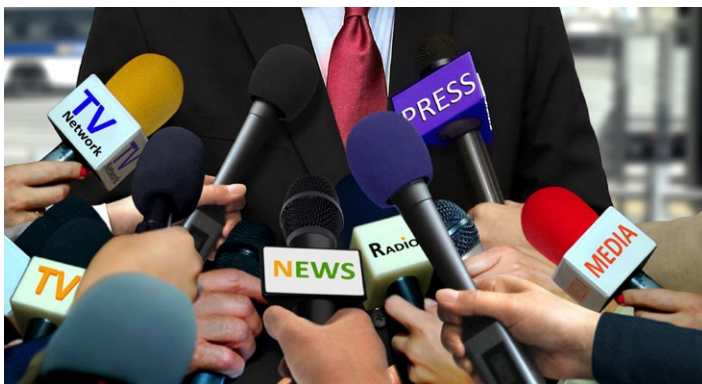
Often it's either staff or a customer that contacts Cal/OSHA to complain about poor COVID-19 protections, as was the case when it received a complaint about a gym in Ventura.

Upon inspection, Cal/OSHA determined that the gym was not enforcing face covering use and physical distancing. It was cited for one willful-serious, two serious and six general violations.

**Proposed penalties:** \$57,740.



### A news report



Cal/OSHA cited a market in Oakland for multiple violations, including three serious. This followed an inspection after local media reported that 17 workers tested positive for COVID-19, one of whom was hospitalized.

Cal/OSHA determined that Cardenas Market had failed to adequately address the potential outbreak of the coronavirus among workers by implementing preventative measures. The business did not initially implement or require face coverings or masks, physical distancing or training of workers on coronavirus hazards. Cardenas Market also failed to immediately report a COVID-19-related serious illness.

**Proposed penalties:** \$30,670.

### A fatality

A large agricultural concern was cited for multiple violations including two serious, following a fatality-initiated inspection after an employee was hospitalized and died from COVID-19 after working at a carrot field in Holtville.

Cal/OSHA found that the employer had failed to implement safety protocols for its farm workers and failed to train them on the COVID-19 hazards and prevention.

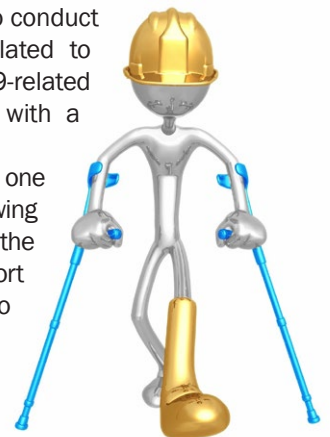
**Proposed penalties:** \$30,600.

### An accident

Sometimes Cal/OSHA shows up to conduct an inspection of an accident unrelated to the coronavirus and finds COVID-19-related infractions as well. This happened with a retailer in Gilroy.

Cal/OSHA cited the shop for one regulatory and one serious citation following an accident inspection. It found that the employer had failed to immediately report a COVID-19-related serious illness, and to establish, implement and maintain an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program.

**Proposed penalties:** \$15,125.



### The takeaway

As you can see, Cal/OSHA will inspect any employer for possible infractions, particularly if there are complaints or news about an outbreak at a workplace. If you have not already done so and you have staff working at a physical location, you should immediately establish safeguards that are in line with Cal/OSHA's emergency regulations.

Remember too: Those regulations not only require you to protect workers against COVID-19, but to also report to Cal/OSHA and other authorities anytime there is an outbreak or a case in your workplace. ❖

Injury Prevention

# Make Sure Workers Focus on Eye Safety



**T**HOUSANDS OF people are blinded each year from work-related eye injuries that could have been prevented with the proper selection and use of eye and face protection.

Eye injuries alone cost more than \$300 million per year in lost production time, medical expenses and worker compensation.

OSHA requires employers to ensure the safety of all employees in the work environment.

Eye and face protection must be provided whenever necessary to protect against chemical, environmental, radiological or mechanical irritants and hazards.

Eye and face protection is addressed in specific standards for the general industry, shipyard employment, longshoring and the construction industry.

It is impossible to predict when and where an eye incident might occur, but it can happen literally in the blink of an eye, injuring or even blinding a worker who's not wearing proper protection.

It's an employer's responsibility to identify the eye safety hazards at the workplace, and then provide workers with the best protection against them.

Along with training on how and when to use eye protection equipment, workers should learn about cleaning, storing and replacing equipment.

In most cases, workplace eye injuries can be avoided if workers have been trained to know when and what eye protection equipment should be worn – and what to do in case of an eye injury.

Below are some common causes of eye injuries, with suggested first aid responses.

In all cases, professional medical attention should be sought as soon as possible after taking initial first aid measures. ❖

## Eye Injury Responses

**Foreign particles** – Go to the nearest eyewash station or water source and flush the eye until the object is rinsed out. Don't rub the eye because the object can scratch or become embedded in the eye. If the object doesn't rinse free, bandage the eye loosely and seek medical attention.

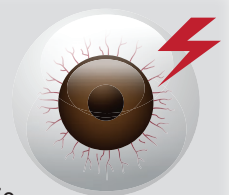
**Chemical splashes** – Seconds count! These require immediate action. Go immediately to the nearest emergency shower or water source. Look directly into the stream of water, hold the eyes open with your fingers, and flush the eyes for at least 15 minutes.

**Light burns** – Exposure to welding, laser or other radiant light without appropriate eyewear does not cause immediate pain, but – four to 12 hours later – exposed eyes may begin to feel "gritty" and become sensitive to light. Redness or swelling may occur. Keep your eyes closed while waiting for medical attention.

**Cuts** – Don't rub, press or wash cuts near the eye. This can cause further damage. Loosely bandage both eyes to stop any movement.

**Embedded objects** – Never try to remove objects embedded in your eye; this can cause further damage. Loosely bandage both eyes and get medical attention.

**Bumps & blows** – Apply a cold compress for 15 minutes to reduce pain.



## Take Safety Precautions

The best solution for when workers are doing any work that could result in an eye injury is to wear proper eye protection. But accidents happen and your workers should know what to do if they suffer an eye injury.