



---

**BIG SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

## **Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) Workplace Safety Q & A's for Small Business Employers**

Establishing a safe and healthful working environment requires every employer -- large and small -- and every worker to make safety and health a top priority. The entire work force -- from the CEO to the most recent hire -- must recognize that worker safety and health is central to the mission and key to the profitability of the American company.

OSHA's job is to provide leadership and encouragement to workers and employers to take that responsibility seriously. We continue to help employers and employees focus on reducing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities and to increase their commitment to improved safety and health.

OSHA can help small businesses and others through a variety of tools, including partnership, consultation, compliance assistance, education and training, outreach, and plain language regulations.

### **Why is safety and health important for a small business owner like me?**

Safety is good business. An effective safety and health program can save \$4 to \$6 for every \$1 invested. It's the right thing to do, and doing it right pays off in lower costs, increased productivity, and higher employee morale.

As an employer, you have a duty to protect your workers from injury and illness on the job. Protecting workers also makes good business sense. Accidents and injuries are more expensive than many realize. Costs mount up quickly. But substantial savings in workers' compensation and lost workdays are possible when injuries and illnesses decline. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can help you.

## How can I reduce employee injuries and illnesses?

Compliance with OSHA rules is essential. Compliance along with an effective voluntary safety and health program can help reduce your costs and injuries and illnesses. An organized, carefully crafted plan that systematically focuses on workplace hazards and employee training is critical. Buy-in from every manager and employee is essential. Everyone has to work at safety and health.

## How do I develop this program?

Each safety and health program should be tailored to fit the company, to blend with its unique operations and culture, and to help employers maintain a system that continually addresses workplace hazards. There are five elements that every effective program should have: management leadership and employee participation, workplace analysis, hazard prevention and control, safety and health training and education, and program evaluation.

## What do you mean by management leadership and employee participation?

Employers and employees work together to make safety and health a priority. Employer and employee involvement communication on workplace and safety and health issues are essential. For example, this partnership can be achieved when you

- Post the company's written safety and health policy for all to see
- Involve employees in policymaking on safety and health issues
- Take an active part in safety activities
- Hold meetings that focus on employee safety and health
- Abide by all safety and health rules
- Show your commitment by investing time, effort, and money in your safety and health program.

## After I identify hazards at my worksite, how can I prevent or control them?

The next part of a good safety and health program is your continual review of your work environment and work practices to control or prevent workplace hazards. This can be done when you

- Regularly and thoroughly maintain equipment
- Ensure that hazard correction procedures are in place
- Ensure that employees know how to use and maintain personal protective equipment

- Ensure that all employees understand and follow safe work procedures
- Make sure that, where necessary, you have a medical program tailored to your facility to help prevent workplace hazards and exposures.

## What else can I do to minimize potential accidents and injuries?

It is important that everyone in the workplace be properly trained, from the floor worker to the supervisors, managers, contractors, and part-time and temporary employees. This can be done when you

- Allow only properly authorized and instructed employees to do any job
- Make sure no employees do any job that appears unsafe
- Hold emergency preparedness drills for employees
- Pay particular attention to employees learning new operations to make sure they have the proper job skills and awareness of hazards
- Train supervisors and managers to recognize hazards and understand their responsibilities
- Encourage all employees to report any hazardous conditions to their supervisors.

## What is the OSHA Consultation visit you mentioned?

OSHA operates various voluntary compliance programs to assist small employers. The OSHA Consultation Service helps employers find out about potential hazards and how to improve their occupational safety and health management. A visit from OSHA consultation is always at the employer's request. The service offers workplace safety and health training and technical assistance. Consultation is a free service largely funded by OSHA and operated by state government agencies using well-trained safety and health staff. This service is completely separate from OSHA's inspection effort; no citations are issued or penalties proposed. An employer's only obligation is to correct serious hazards that the consultant finds. The visit begins with an opening conference between the consultant and the employer followed by a walkaround of the worksite. For more information on consultation services, contact your nearest OSHA office listed at the end of this publication or visit OSHA's website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

## Can I get other help from OSHA?

OSHA also provides others services and assistance to help small businesses. These include the following:

- **Third-Party Training and Education** -- OSHA gives training and education grants to

various non-profit groups to develop programs to help small businesses establish safety and health programs. Grantees develop training programs and materials that they make available to small businesses. For more information on grants, see the Index at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

- **Mentoring** -- OSHA's Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) recognize worksites where employers and employees work together to achieve safety and health excellence. Small firms can be matched with and mentored by a VPP site that will share its safety and health experience and expertise. For more information on VPP, contact your VPP coordinator in your nearest OSHA regional office.
- **Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP)** -- Part of the Consultation Program, SHARP also recognizes exemplary employers who take special pride in providing a safe and healthful work environment for their employees and who meet specific program criteria. Employers who qualify receive a 1-year exemption from OSHA's general schedule inspections.
- **Training and Education** -- OSHA's Training Institute in Des Plaines, IL, and OSHA's Training Education Centers across the country provide basic and advanced courses in safety and health. OSHA's area offices offer information services, such as audiovisual aids, technical advice, and speakers for special engagements. For more information, contact the Institute at 1555 Times Drive, Des Plaines, IL 60018, (847) 297-4810, or fax (847) 297-4874. A list of courses also can be found under Outreach at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). Note, in particular, OSHA's computer-based training software -- Expert Advisors -- on topics such as hazard communication, asbestos, cadmium, confined spaces, fire safety, lead in construction, and more! See the Index on OSHA's home page for this and other information.
- **State Plans** -- Twenty-four states and two territories operate their own federally approved occupational safety and health programs. These entities conduct most OSHA enforcement through their own standards, which are at least as effective as Federal OSHA's, but may have different or additional requirements. Many states offer additional programs of assistance to small businesses. For more information on state plans, see the list of plans at the end of this brochure or visit OSHA's website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).
- **Electronic Information/Internet** -- OSHA standards, interpretations, directives, interactive software, compliance assistance materials, e-Tools, and additional information are available or can be ordered online at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). See also, OSHA's online small business page.
- **Publications** -- OSHA has many published materials, including specific topics for small

businesses, that are available or can be ordered online at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). Publications lists and single copies of various OSHA materials can be obtained by sending a self-addressed label to the OSHA Publications Office, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room N-3101, Washington, DC 20210, or by calling (202) 693-1888.

Of particular interest may be publications in OSHA's Small Business Safety and Health Management Series, which along with other materials, are available online at OSHA's website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). They include, for example, Assessing the Need for Personal Protective Equipment: A Guide for Small Business Employers (OSHA 3151); Safeguarding Equipment and Protecting Workers from Amputations (OSHA 3170); and A Guide to Scaffold Use in the Construction Industry (3150). These booklets also are sold by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, phone (202) 512-1800; fax (202) 512-2250, and can be ordered online through GPO's website at [www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov).

OSHA regulations are contained in Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1904 (Recordkeeping), 1910 (General Industry), 1915 through 1925 (Maritime), 1926 (Construction), and 1928 (Agriculture). All OSHA regulations are available or can be ordered online at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). Printed copies of OSHA regulations are sold by the Government Printing Office and can be ordered online as indicated above.

- Small Business Liaison -- OSHA's liaison is available to answer questions on small business issues at (202) 693-2213 or visit OSHA's small business page. See Small Business under the Index on OSHA's website at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). See also the OSHA Regional Office list elsewhere in this publication.
- 
- Emergencies -- For life-threatening situations only, call (800) 321-OSHA. Complaints will go immediately to the nearest OSHA area or state office for help.

### **Small Business Development Centers**

OSHA is working closely with the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Small Business Development Centers program to provide information on OSHA and its many programs available to small business owners. There is at least one center in every state -- a total of 1,000 nationwide -- that provides services to small businesses. For a center near you, visit SBA's website at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

## OSHA Regional Offices

OSHA has small business liaisons available in each of its regions to assist you.

### Region I

(CT,\* MA, ME, NH, RI, VT\*)  
JKF Federal Building, Room E-340  
Boston, MA 02203  
Telephone: (617) 565-9860

### Region II

(NJ,\* NY,\* PR,\* VI\*)  
201 Varick Street, Room 670  
New York, NY 10014  
Telephone: (212) 337-2357

### Region III

(DC, DE, MD,\* PA, VA,\* WV)  
The Curtis Center, Suite 740 West  
170 S. Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3309  
Telephone: (215) 861-4900

### Region IV

(AL, FL, GA, KY,\* MS, NC,\* SC,\* TN\*)  
Sam Nun Atlanta Federal Center  
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Room 6T50  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Telephone: (404) 562-2300

### Region V

(IL, IN,\* MI,\* MN,\* OH, WI)  
230 South Dearborn Street  
Room 3244  
Chicago, IL 60604  
Telephone: (312) 353-2220

### Region VI

(AR, LA, NM,\* OK, TX)  
525 Griffin Street, Room 602  
Dallas, TX 75202  
Telephone: (214) 767-4731

**Region VII**

(IA,\* KS, MO, NE)

City Center Square

1100 Main Street, Suite 800

Kansas City, MO 64105

Telephone: (816) 426-5861

**Region VIII**

(CO, MT, ND, SD, UT,\* WY\*)

1999 Broadway, Suite 1690

Denver, CO 80201-6550

Telephone: (303) 844-1600

**Region IX**

(American Samoa, AZ,\* CA,\* Guam, HI,\*  
NV,\* Trust Territories of the Pacific)

71 Stevenson Street, Suite 420

San Francisco, CA 94105

Telephone: (415) 975-4310

**Region X**

(AK,\* ID, OR,\* WA\*)

1111 Third Avenue, Suite 715

Seattle, WA 98101-3212

Telephone: (206) 553-5930

\* These states and territories operate their own OSHA-approved job safety and health programs (Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York plans cover public employees only). States with approved programs must have a standard that is identical to, or at least as effective as, the federal standard.