Top OSHA Violations

OSHA recently released a list of the 2016 top 10 safety and health violations that employers need to work harder to prevent.

1. Fall protection
2. Hazard communication
3. Scaffolds
4. Respiratory protection
5. Lockout/tagout
6. Powered industrial trucks
7. Ladders
8. Machine guarding
9. Electrical wiring
10. Electrical, general requirements

Employers should have an ongoing campaign to inform employees about these potential hazards. For example, lockout/tagout and machine guarding violations are a major concern in the printing industry. Proper lockout/tagout procedures ensure that machines are powered off properly and can't be turned on while someone is working on them.

PIC is now offering members, free of charge, review of their environmental and safety compliance programs and includes training of personnel in accident prevention, accident response, emergency preparedness, and use of protective clothing and equipment. We also do a walkthrough of the facility verbally pointing out areas of concern.

For more information or to schedule the review, please contact Gerry Bonetto at (323) 728-9500, ext. 248.

Postal Reform - 2017

Three weeks ago, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee “marked-up” and approved the Postal Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 756). A mark-up is a formal process where a congressional committee can consider and amend a bill before advancing it to the full House of Representatives or Senate.

The favorable vote to move the bill out of the Oversight Committee is one of several key steps in a still lengthy legislative process.

Much of what the bill would do deals with the health benefits for employees and retirees, pensions, governance and contracting. Postmaster General Megan J. Brennan said the provision requiring postal retirees to fully participate in Medicare is key because that “would essentially eliminate our unfunded liability for retiree health benefits.”

For customers, the legislation would allow a one-cent increase in the price of a first-class stamp. Centralized, or cluster box, delivery would be used for homes where 40 percent of residents agree, with a waiver for the physically disabled. Before postal officials could close a local post office, they would have to consider the distance to the next one, the availability of broadband Internet service and local conditions, including weather and terrain. Finally, the bill would not end Saturday mail delivery.
New Cellphone Law

Several years ago California made it illegal for drivers to call or text without a hands-free device while driving. The law didn't address the issue when a driver is simply holding the phone or checking an app, such as the navigation app for directions.

In 2016, the legislature addressed this very issue. The bill, which went into effect January 1, 2017, prohibits drivers “from holding and operating” their phones for any reason, with the exception of a function that requires only “the motion of a single swipe or tap of the driver’s finger.” Even then the phone must be mounted on the vehicle’s windshield or dashboard. Violations will result in a traffic citation.

An employer wouldn’t likely be liable for an employee’s traffic citation for improper use of the cell phone, but the employer could be liable if the employee is involved in an accident because of the improper use of the cell phone.

You should tell or remind your employees about California’s law regarding cell phone use while driving.

Public Pensions

California’s retired government workers earn 26 percent more in retirement than private-sector workers earn while still on the job.

That’s the finding of an in-depth analysis recently released by the California Policy Center. “This is an absolutely upside-down system,” said California Policy Center CEO Mark Bucher.

The new study found that the average pension for a retired public employee in California was $68,673 in 2015, before benefits. By contrast, active private-sector workers earned on average just $54,326.

That same year, the maximum Social Security benefit for a high-wage earner retiring at age 66 was just $32,244 – less than half the benefit of a retired government worker.

You can find the complete study at http://californiapolicycenter.org/what-is-the-average-pension-for-a-retired-government-worker-in-california/.

Regulation Review

AB 12 (Ken Cooley, D-Rancho Cordova) passed by bipartisan vote the California Assembly’s Accountability and Administrative Review Committee. The bill will implement a ‘look back mechanism’ for the state’s regulatory agencies to review their regulations and amend or repeal any that are duplicative, overlapping, inconsistent, or outmoded.

Opponents were concerned that the bill was a companion of President Trump’s deregulation efforts at the Federal level. The bill’s author addressed their concerns, noting that this legislation originated with California Democrats in 2011 and does not require or encourage any state agency to repeal regulations that have proven effective and necessary.

AB 12 will next move to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, but has yet to be scheduled for hearing.