

HEALTH & SAFETY

Surviving an OSHA inspection — remove low-hanging fruit

By Jim Stanley, President of FDRsafety

The idea of an Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspection is sometimes scary and confusing for employers, but being prepared revolves around a simple idea — getting rid of the low-hanging fruit.

The easy pickings for OSHA inspectors often are a result of failures in five areas:

- **Permit-required confined spaces** – Protecting workers who enter permit-required confined spaces.
- **Lockout/tagout** – Making sure that employees who are servicing or maintaining equipment are not exposed to unanticipated energization.
- **Personal protective equipment** – Identifying hazards that require personal protective equipment for workers and then making sure every worker has been provided the equipment and trained in its use and that they wear it.
- **Recordkeeping** – Carefully following OSHA's rules on recording injuries and illnesses on the OSHA 300 Log.
- **OSHA-required training** – Conducting safety training in such a way to ensure that it is understood by workers.

Creating a working safety program starts with the identification of hazards specific to the work site. I recommend that you conduct a mock OSHA audit — either by yourself or with the assistance of a consultant. If and when potential problems are identified, develop a plan that addresses them.

The best overall approach to survive an OSHA inspection is to have a safe workplace with a safety program to which top management is committed. It should also involve the employees and hold managers and workers accountable for following safe work practices.

To help make it easier to put at least one piece of fruit out of OSHA's reach, my company, FDRsafety, is offering a free tool to assess hazards that may require the use of personal protective equipment. OSHA requires this hazard assessment for all general industry employers, and our hazard assessment form includes a place to make the OSHA-required certification.

We first offered this personal protective equipment assessment form a few months ago and received an extremely strong response. Since we want to make sure it is available to everyone who needs it, we are offering it again. Simply e-mail us at info@fdrsafety.com.

Jim Stanley is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA. FDRsafety, www.fdrsafety.com, provides OSHA compliance services, including mock OSHA audits, along with assistance on issues involving confined spaces, personal protective equipment, lockout/tagout, and recordkeeping. For more information, contact FDR safety at info@fdrsafety.com or 1.888.755.8010. ♦