

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 026

CE 017 433

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TITLE Job Safety and Health at Federal Agencies.
INSTITUTION Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 23p.; Illustrations in this document may not reproduce well.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Guides; Federal Government; Federal Legislation; Federal Regulation; Government Employees; *Health Conditions; *Personnel Needs; *Program Administration; Program Design; *Safety; Standards; *Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS Occupational Safety and Health Act; United States

ABSTRACT

This booklet for management, heads of safety and health programs, supervisors, employees, and representatives of labor organizations highlights the most important features of a comprehensive program that effectively protects Federal employees from safety and health hazards. The content is in two sections. The first concentrates on the administration of safety and health programs in all Federal agencies and includes standards, recordkeeping and reporting, committees, inspections, eliminating hazards, evaluation and annual reports, and councils. The focus of the second section is on the organizational structure needed to make a program work and discusses agency head, designated safety and health official, and program staff. (EM)

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Job Safety and Health at Federal Agencies



U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and
Health Administration
Office of Federal Agency
Safety and Health Programs

1978

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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CE: Q17433

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Job Safety and Health at Federal Agencies



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CE 017 433

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Purpose of This Booklet

Occupational safety and health programs at Federal agencies are not voluntary. All Federal agencies must have comprehensive programs that effectively protect their employees from safety and health hazards, whether in an office, on a loading platform, at a construction site, or in a laboratory.

Section 19 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 requires creation of "effective and comprehensive" programs at Federal agencies. Executive Order 11807 of September 28, 1974, further defines the responsibilities of the agencies and the role of the Secretary of Labor in developing, implementing, and evaluating such programs. It directs the agencies to comply with the regulations in 29 CFR 1960 (published in the *Federal Register* October 9, 1974), issued by the Secretary of Labor. If an agency's size, mission, or organization clashes with the regulations, then it must follow the intent of the rules. They are revised from time to time to keep up with new developments, but please keep in mind that the regulations merely outline the minimum program agencies must adopt.

The purpose of this booklet is to highlight the most important features of an effective and comprehensive program for any agency. Top management in an agency, the head of a safety and health program, supervisors, employees, and representatives of labor organizations should find this booklet helpful as an outline of their rights and responsibilities and, at a

minimum, what needs to be done to maintain a safe and healthful workplace.

The death, injury, and illness statistics for Federal agencies show that there is need for an organized, concerted effort to reduce unsafe and unhealthful practices and conditions. According to the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs,



the number of reported nonfatal injuries in the approximately 2.9 million civilian workforce rose from 121,052 in 1974 to 155,788 in 1975, and to 174,989 the following year.

These figures suggest the human cost of unsafe and unhealthful working conditions and practices. The cost to the government in compensating employees and their survivors runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars. In fiscal 1974, this cost was almost \$225 million; it rose dramatically to \$304 million in fiscal 1975, about \$412 million in fiscal 1976, and to \$493 million the following year.

Adaptability has been built into the rules and regulations for Federal agency programs. Agencies, for example, have the choice of adopting the standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on how to handle certain materials, what kinds of guards to use on some machines, and the like, or to create their own standards if they believe that would better meet their particular problems. But, the new standards must be consistent with and at least as effective as those of OSHA. In practice, they ought to be more effective because the rationale for creating them was to cover the particular hazards at the agency.

This booklet will concentrate on safety and health programs covering the 5.5 million civilian and military employees in nearly 100 Federal

agencies, a number of which have had such plans in operation for many years. Injury and illness records must be kept, as well as reports of accidents resulting only in property damage, and a preventive program must be adopted. (Employees of private contractors, even if they are working on Federal property with government equipment and personnel, are covered by the OSHA regulations for private industry.)

Nothing in this booklet may be interpreted contrary to provisions of the Act, the Executive Order, or the published rules and regulations. If anything is unclear, or if you need advice and help in establishing and maintaining a sound program, there is one Office that has the experience and is prepared to serve you:

Office of Federal Agency Safety
and Health Programs
Occupational Safety and Health
Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C. 20210

In addition, this Office has one experienced coordinator in each of the 10 OSHA regions ready to consult with you and advise you at your field installations. The addresses and phone numbers of the regional coordinators are listed at the end of this booklet.

The booklet is divided into two major sections. The first concentrates on the administration of safety and health programs in all agencies and the second on the organizational structure needed to make a program work.

A Program for All Agencies

To be useful to all Federal agencies, this booklet touches on the elements common to the administration of any effective program. These common elements must be incorporated in all agency programs. One important goal of these operating methods is to make as many people as possible more aware of the actual and potential hazards of their work. Recognizing unsafe or unhealthful acts, practices, and conditions is, after all, a vital step in the prevention of injuries and illnesses. And prevention is the key to an effective program.

The rules and regulations governing the operating methods of Federal agency programs were designed to be flexible. Agencies with hazardous job environments, as well as agencies with less serious problems, can meet the intent of the regulations through whatever policies, procedures, and methods fit their size and needs.

The Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs will consult with any agency on the overall design of its program or on any part of it.

Standards

An agency has a choice. The standards OSHA developed for private industry can be adopted complete and unchanged. Or the agency can create its own standards to meet particular needs, provided its standards are consistent with OSHA's and

at least as effective; several agencies have done this.

Before agencies adopt, eliminate, or modify any standards, they must establish a procedure for doing so and insure that employees have a chance to contribute to its development. The procedure then must be publicized throughout an agency.

If the proposed standards are different from those of OSHA, the agency head must so inform the Secretary of Labor, giving the Secretary time before they are adopted to comment on whether they are consistent with OSHA standards.

If employees from two or more agencies work on a joint project, or occupy the same building, the heads of the agencies involved should consult with each other, and with the Secretary of Labor if they wish, to insure that there is no conflict in their safety and health regulations. Regardless of location, however, the heads of agencies are responsible for the safety and health of their own employees.

Where jobs are hazardous, it is the responsibility of an agency to provide employees with personal protective equipment specifically designed for such work, and to be sure that the equipment is used.

If a grave problem suddenly arises over, for example, the handling of a

toxic substance, the Secretary of Labor may issue an emergency temporary standard, which must be adopted immediately without modification by all agencies. After the Secretary issues a permanent standard, agencies may use normal procedures to decide how the standard applies to them. If they wish, they may adopt their own provisions, as long as the replacements are consistent with the permanent standard. Similarly, if a crisis should arise in a particular agency, the agency head may immediately adopt an emergency temporary standard for that agency, quickly informing employees and the Secretary of Labor of the action taken.

Each agency must also notify the Secretary of Labor every three months regarding any standards adopted, modified, or eliminated.

Recordkeeping and Reporting

Agencies must establish a system to collect and compile injury, illness, and accident data. OSHA's Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs can supply forms basic to such a system. These include a log for recording injuries and illnesses as they occur; this must be kept on file and made available to OSHA on request. There is also an annual summary of injuries and illnesses which must be submitted to OSHA. An agency will find that by using these forms and devising its own summaries--monthly, for example--it will create an information system identifying its most hazardous conditions and practices. This, in turn, tells an agency where priorities must be



placed to bring about a safer, more healthful workplace.

Copies of the OSHA logs and summaries for each workplace of an agency must be made available there to employees and representatives of their organizations who may want to look at them. The success of a program hinges on labor-management cooperation and widespread information on where the problems exist.

An agency that believes it needs more detailed information than the OSHA



forms require may adopt any supplementary recordkeeping system it wishes. But, the official forms must still be used for reporting occupational injuries, illnesses, and accidents to OSHA.

In addition, any accident in which an employee is killed or which hospitalizes five employees or more, or where there is property damage of \$100,000 or more, must be reported (within two working days) by the head of the Federal agency to the Secretary of Labor.

Committees

The head of the program should form a top-level safety and health committee composed of management, safety and health professionals, and employees (including representatives of their organizations) at the agency's headquarters. Similarly, large units at an agency's headquarters and its field offices must have committees composed of a mix of line and staff officials and employees. All committees, then, can help in the development of particular standards for an agency, in publicizing the program and, in general, in advising and assisting those responsible for mounting an effective campaign.

Inspections

Qualified safety and health professionals must be employed to periodically inspect work practices and equipment at hazardous jobsites—construction, chemical processing, loading platforms, and the like. Just how many inspections ought to be made each year depends on the type of work done and the hazards involved.

In workplaces with few hazards, such as offices, selected personnel can be assigned collateral duty as inspectors after they have been trained in what to look for and procedures and forms to use. (More on this training later.)

But, all workplaces, no matter how seemingly safe and healthful, must be

thoroughly inspected at least once a year. Finding potential hazards is one of the first steps in the prevention of accidents.

If they are to do an effective job, inspectors must be able to talk freely with employees and supervisors about conditions at the workplace. Reprisals or discrimination against employees who speak frankly about working conditions must be prohibited in agencies.

Inspectors can take samples of materials, or take photographs, or use other reasonable techniques to help them in their work. Under normal circumstances, there must not be an advance notice of inspection. This is so the inspector will get a clear picture of normal operations. However, if an agency is notified that a hazard is developing that is likely to cause serious harm, inspectors must immediately visit the site and advise appropriate agency officials what action must be taken.

A representative of the official in charge of a worksite and a representative chosen by the employees (or the employees' organization) should accompany the inspector making a routine or emergency visit. These representatives can be helpful in supplying the inspector with information. The inspector, in turn, may comment on safety and health practices observed. The establishment's safety and health committee may act as both management and employee representative if the official in charge and the committee agree that is acceptable.

Management and labor representatives should confer with the inspector after the worksite walkthrough. At that time, the inspector must make a preliminary report on any hazards seen. In turn, the representatives can explain why some things are done the way they are, and it is possible that a better way may become clear during the discussion.

Smaller agencies that would like to have a professional opinion may ask the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs or its regional coordinators (whose addresses and phone numbers are listed at the end of this booklet) to assist them in inspecting their headquarters or field locations. Larger agencies may ask for help when they do not have the expertise to inspect a specific hazard, or when they would like a general survey as an aid in training their own people.

OSHA does not issue citations to Federal agencies for violations of standards; it only makes recommendations for correction. Although each agency is responsible for conducting its own inspections each year, a walkthrough by "outsiders" has the advantage of giving an agency an objective view of its job practices and conditions.

Eliminating Hazards

Agency inspectors have the authority to issue notices of unsafe or unhealthful working conditions. The notices should be very specific on



what the hazards are and where applicable, which standards are being violated. They must also set a reasonable amount of time for correcting the unsafe or unhealthful conditions. Copies of the notice must be sent to the officer in charge of the establishment where the violation is found and to its safety and health committee. A copy also must be posted (for a minimum of three days) in a conspicuous place as close to the scene of the violation as practical and must remain posted until the condition is corrected.

The officer in charge of an establishment has the primary responsibility for correcting conditions there, including those specified by an inspector, within the stated period. After that period, the inspector should take

another look at the condition or practice to be sure the violation no longer exists. Scheduling of the reinspection depends on the seriousness of the violation.

If the head of an establishment believes that it is not possible to correct a violation within 30 work days, a report must be submitted to the agency's safety and health manager detailing why it cannot be done sooner, along with a timetable for eliminating the violation and a list of steps being taken in the interim to protect employees. A copy of this report must be sent to the establishment's safety and health committee. If the officer in charge judges that correcting a violation will take more than 60 work days, a copy of the same kind of report also must be sent by the chief of the safety and health program to the agency head, who in turn must transmit a copy to the Secretary of Labor.

Each agency must post in a conspicuous place in all its worksites notices of employee rights and obligations under the safety and health program, stating where employees can get information about the agency's program and how to report what they believe are unsafe or unhealthful working conditions and practices. OSHA has a poster available with this information; copies may be obtained from the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs or its regional coordinators.

In most safety and health programs, employees are asked to first speak to their supervisors when they see what they believe to be hazardous

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conditions or practices. Often, a problem can be cleared up immediately. However, if the employee is not satisfied or believes the situation is so serious that safety and health officials ought to know about it, he or she may file a written report on the alleged hazard and request an inspection.

Each agency must set up a chain of review, ending with its safety and health program head, to handle such employee reports. Should a worker request anonymity, officials may disclose the person's name only if the inspector cannot find the alleged hazard without the employee's help. The official first responsible for handling such a report has five days to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the hazard exists and to order an inspection. If the officer decides there are no reasonable grounds to believe a hazard exists, or an inspector finds that the reported condition presents no problem, the employee must be notified in writing of the finding and the reasons for it.

If, after going through the chain of authority, the employee is not satisfied with the final review by the program head, he or she can submit a written objection to one of the regional coordinators of the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs. The Office can ask the agency for a report of its investigation and the name of the employee, or decide that the situation is serious enough to offer to send OSHA inspectors to help assess the condition.

The whole process should be speeded up, of course, when the employee asserts that a condition is so serious that an accident is likely to happen at any moment. Supervisors, officers, and the head of a safety and health program should immediately decide whether an inspection is necessary. Again, if they decide no action is necessary, employees who disagree with this finding can appeal to the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs.

Evaluation and Annual Reports

At least once a year, the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs must evaluate the program of each agency with more than 1,000 employees. It may do so more often, however, asking the agency for special reports if the Office believes additional information is needed before judging the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the program.

This OSHA Office publishes outlines of the kinds of documentation it expects to see when evaluating an agency's program. It is ready to consult with agency officials to help correct any problems identified during an evaluation.

One purpose of the evaluation is to give the agency head and those deeply involved in a safety and health program an impartial view of

their work. An outsider very often give insiders a fresh perspective on how they are doing. The Secretary of Labor then transmits the evaluation, along with any recommendations for changes, to the head of the agency, asking for an official response including target dates for implementing the recommendations.

Evaluations of all agencies, the Secretary's recommendations, and agencies' responses, together with a summary of the evaluations, are sent to the President

The Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs and the Secretary of Labor are also responsible for reporting annually to the President. He, in turn, must report to Congress on the effectiveness of the Government's safety and health programs. The OSHA Office sends instructions to each agency on the kind of information required for this annual report. This may include a statement of each agency's goals and whether they were met the past year, how many employees and what categories of employees received training, and the like. The Office compiles and analyzes the information, perhaps in relation to whatever was uncovered during the evaluations, and adds recommendations. The Secretary of Labor transmits this to the President and prepares a draft report for him which, in its final form is sent to Congress

Councils

The Federal Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health (consisting of 15 members from government, at least five of whom must be from labor organizations representing Federal employees) studies problems common to most agencies and recommends changes. The Council recommended, for example, and OSHA accepted, a revision of the injury, illness, and accident reporting system for all agencies. Every year the Council oversees the nomination procedure of the President's Awards for Safety and Health in the Federal Service.

Field Federal safety and health councils exist throughout the country wherever there is a concentration of agencies. Their purposes are: to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among management, employees, and safety and health specialists; to help field offices develop better programs to meet their particular needs, and to sponsor and conduct training.

Agency heads must direct their field offices to participate in council activities, they will also encourage Federal employee labor organizations to do so. The officials in charge of field offices must appoint members of their safety and health staffs to serve on the councils and encourage lively involvement in council work.

Staffing the Program

Agency Head and Designated Safety and Health Official

The single most important factor in reducing health and safety hazards is the commitment of the agency head. If the top official pays little attention to safety and health problems, everyone else in the agency is likely to do the same. But, if the leadership shows a deep and lasting concern about safety and health conditions, this attitude will be communicated throughout the agency. One way of expressing this commitment, for example, is to make an employee's safety and health record a part of that individual's performance evaluation. It

would be likely, then, that supervisors and employees would not ignore the issue.

Perhaps the most important safety and health decision the agency head can make is the choice of a top aide to lead the program. And it must be a top aide. The Secretary of Labor has determined that an assistant secretary or other official of equivalent rank or degree of responsibility would have the necessary stature and authority to institute a comprehensive program and make it work. This officer need not and in many cases would not work full-time on safety and health



The top aide assigned this responsibility is called the "designated safety and health official." The duties of the designated officials are to establish

- an occupational safety and health policy to carry out the provisions of Section 19 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Executive Order 11807, and 29 CFR 1960
- an organization and set of procedures to effectively implement that policy, "considering the mission, size, and organization of the agency"
- goals and objectives to reduce and eliminate accidents, injuries, and illnesses



- plans and procedures to evaluate the health and safety program's effectiveness at all operational levels, and
- a ranking of the factors causing accidents, injuries, and illnesses so that the major ones can be attacked first

A revision of Part 1960.20, published in the *Federal Register* February 8, 1977, requires designated safety and health officials and other top officials to "receive orientation and other learning experiences which will enable them to manage" their programs. The OSHA Training Institute at Des Plaines, Illinois, has designed a two-week course (No. 600-4) for full-time safety officers and safety supervisors and a one-week course (No. 600-2) to meet the special needs of officials who spend only part of their time on safety and health matters.

While designated and other top officials may orient themselves any way they think best, most will find that they cannot get a better introduction in a shorter time than through the courses, which are given often during the year at the Training Institute. Arrangements can be made for presentation of the same material at your agency's location. For more information, or to enroll, contact the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs (address and phone number are at the end of this booklet).

Of course, the designated officials must be given sufficient funds,

equipment, and professional staff -- trained and experienced in occupational safety and health -- to carry out their assignment

Staff

The designated official's staff will consist of all or some of the following, depending on the size and type of work the agency does. (Obviously, a naval shipyard will need more specialized staff than an office.)

1. **Principal Safety and Health Professional** -- Depending on the main activities of the agency, this would be a trained safety specialist, engineer, or industrial hygienist. The professional would be the full-time safety and health manager in a large agency and would report directly to the designated official in charge of the program.

The principal officers, because of their expert knowledge and experience, would be the key persons in adapting OSHA standards to the particular needs and problems of their agencies, at headquarters, and in the field. They would be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the agency's program. To do this, they would have to develop a sound and practical system for keeping records of workplace accidents, injuries, and illnesses.

The manager must also establish guidelines on how to apply safety and health standards, and accident-prevention techniques to the

agency's operations. Agency plans and specifications for new construction and machines, major modifications in equipment and buildings, and new work procedures must be reviewed by the professional to insure that they incorporate the best technology and practices to protect the safety and health of employees.

The professional must insure that training procedures and educational materials are developed so that new employees will be thoroughly instructed and periodically updated in the agency's safety and health program. One of the most important responsibilities, and perhaps the hardest to accomplish, is to get employees, top management, and supervisors to actively participate in creating and implementing the agency's safety and health program.

Under normal circumstances, the safety and health manager would work out of the agency's headquarters, especially if the agency has several large field offices or a number of small, scattered field operations. If the agency has one major field office away from headquarters, particularly one involving construction, it may wish to place the manager there. In any case, the location of the manager's office is not as important as ready access to the designated official, support from top management, and awareness of the manager's status throughout the agency.

Program managers must be formally trained in the safety and health

codes of their agencies. This can be accomplished partly through the OSHA Training Institute's two-week course (No. 600-4) for full-time safety and health officials of Federal agencies. The course covers such topics as program organization and evaluation, recordkeeping and reporting, hazard recognition and controls and workplace inspection. To enroll in the free course (given several times a year), or to arrange to have it offered at your agency, contact OSHA's Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs.

Training Institute courses, however, do not cover standards or requirements peculiar to each agency. Therefore, an agency will have to give additional training to its own people if its codes deviate from those of OSHA. For this reason, program managers should consider setting up their own training course for the safety and health staff and other employees. The Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs and its regional coordinators are available to help develop the course.

2. Safety and Health Specialists

They are trained and experienced safety and health specialists, fire protection engineers, health physicists, and industrial hygienists who work for the program manager in all phases of developing and implementing the program.

Some or all of these full-time professionals would be needed in agencies with 1,000 or more employees and in smaller agencies with hazardous workplaces. They, too, must be formally trained in the particular programs of their agencies. This can be done through the two-week course at the OSHA Training Institute, but agencies are encouraged to develop their own programs to suit special needs.

3. Collateral Duty Safety and Health Officers — In very small agencies, or in the small, scattered field locations of a larger agency, there may not be a need for a full-time safety and health manager and specialists. The small size of a group is not an excuse for the absence of a program, but OSHA recognizes that where the work is not very hazardous, or only a few employees are exposed to safety and health problems, a part-time official could adequately assist in the administration of an agency's program.

These collateral duty officials must spend at least 15 percent of their time on safety and health work. However, depending on the number of employees and the hazards they are exposed to, more than 50 percent of their time may be required in this area.

Again, some kind of formal training is needed. The OSHA Training Institute's one-week course was

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designed for these part-timers. In condensed form, it covers much of the same material as the two-week course. The one-week course, too, is free; it is given often during the year at Des Plaines, Illinois, or it can be offered at agency locations

4. Safety and Health Inspectors— If there is an increased risk of accident or illness because of the nature of the work — for example, chemical or machine processes, materials handling, or loading operations — then qualified specialists must make periodic inspections of jobsites. How many times a year inspections must be conducted is a matter of judgment for the designated safety and health official

In less hazardous workplaces — offices, for example — personnel with some training in recognizing unsafe or unhealthful conditions may make these inspections instead of specialists

Whatever the work environment, inspections must be conducted at least once a year. It would be a good idea for agencies to encourage their full-time inspectors to take the two-week course at the OSHA Training Institute and their part-timers to take the one-week course.

5. Supervisors — They have the important task of the day-to-day enforcement of safety and health regulations. Nothing can be more important than informing supervisors why certain regulations have been

adopted, getting feedback from them on how practical they find the rules and procedures, and training them to spot potential hazards so that accidents and resulting injuries can be prevented.

The supervisor is management's representative in closest contact with agency employees. If supervisors understand that top management is vitally interested in safety and health and that their performance in this area will be rated, the agency will be on its way toward an effective program.

The training regulations state that supervisors, too, must be oriented and take courses related to their safety and health responsibilities.



This can be done through course 600-2 or 600-4, offered at OSHA's Training Institute

6. Employee Organization Representatives — Without the cooperation of employees and representatives of their organizations, there will not be an effective program. This is why the regulations require that these people have a voice in developing and implementing a safety and health plan.

Training programs must be offered to an agency's employees who are representatives of recognized labor

organizations. The training should stress whatever will help them participate effectively in workplace safety and health inspections. Once again, the OSHA Training Institute can be of help. Contact the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs or its regional coordinators for information and to enroll.

In general, all employees must receive specialized training in the safety and health aspects of their particular jobs and in their rights and responsibilities under the programs of their agencies.



Conclusion

In the past, job safety and health at Federal agencies did not receive the emphasis it should have. Now, there is a commitment to have the Federal government, the nation's largest employer, comply with the same standards imposed on private industry. Agencies may have to change their accepted ways of doing things, perhaps increase their budgets and staff, to bring about a safer and more healthful work environment. The letter and the spirit of the law permit no less.

This booklet has attempted to outline the minimum that agencies must do. It has attempted to set up general program and staffing guidelines to help any agency meet its responsibilities. Although there are some hard and fast regulations, there is also room for flexibility, for creative adaptation of standards to the specific needs of an agency. If you have an idea that other agencies might profit from, please inform the Office of Federal Agency Safety and Health Programs.

Along these lines, there is a technique that several agencies have found invaluable: having safety and health professionals analyze the hazards in each job classification in the agency. Hazard analysis can be a lot of work, but it gives everyone in the agency, particularly top management, a clear idea where actual and potential problems exist and what kinds of standards and procedures are necessary to solve them.

Written instructions, based on the analyses, ought to be given to employees so they will know how to work safely, and to supervisors so they can effectively oversee the safety and health practices of subordinates. Then, the professional safety and health staff would know what needs to be emphasized in inspections, training, and enforcement of standards. This can be a vital step in building the kind of preventive programs that would reach the goal of providing a safe and healthful work environment for the nation's 5.5 million Federal workers.

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