

Compliance Corner: Top OSHA Safety Inspection Findings
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The California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) protects workers by setting and enforcing workplace safety standards for all businesses that employ individuals in the state. Although Cal/OSHA can perform random routine workplace safety and compliance inspections, generally the agency only inspects a business if there has been a work-related death, an inordinate number of serious employee injuries or illnesses, or a filed complaint regarding unsafe working conditions. Complaints regarding unsafe work environments are the most common reason for a Cal/OSHA Occupational Safety and Health Appeals Board inspection.

Cal/OSHA inspections are unannounced and the inspector is not obligated to provide the reason for the inspection. You have the right to see identification and stay with the inspector during the inspection (barring times in which he or she may ask to speak to your employees privately). You also have the right to refuse to allow the inspector access to your business; however, this is not recommended. You may appeal citations to the Cal/OSHA Board.

The following are some of the most common Cal/OSHA citations issued for California businesses:

1. Current written safety plan is incomplete or non-existent.
California is the only state which requires a written safety plan. It must be updated yearly. The five major components of a written safety plan include:
 - Illness and Injury Prevention Plan (IIPP)
 - Hazard Communication Program
 - Emergency Action Plan
 - Fire Prevention Plan
 - Heat Illness Prevention Plan (HIPP) (if applicable)

In addition to these components, veterinary practices should have a zoonotic disease program in place which provides information about potential zoonotic diseases that workers could encounter in the veterinary practice. The program should include procedures to follow for reducing the chance of disease transmission, such as the use of personal protective equipment, and should also provide guidelines for what an employee should do if they suspect they have contracted a zoonotic disease. More information about zoonotic disease program requirements can be found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5199.1

Certain veterinary businesses may also need to implement a hearing conservation program if workers are exposed to noise above a certain level for a specified period of time. More information about this regulatory requirement can be found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Sections 5097 and 5098.

2. Food and medications commingled.

Food and beverages should be stored and consumed in an area completely separate from medications, medical instruments, and medical procedures. This includes a separate refrigerator for human food and beverages.

3. Frayed electrical cords/too many plugs in one outlet.

Fire is one of the most common workplace hazards reported in California. Frayed electrical cords and/or overloaded electrical outlets are commonly associated with fires. Therefore, all cords should be checked at least monthly. Self-inspections should be documented in a written log. Electrical sockets should not be overloaded with an excessive number of plugs.

4. Current Safety Data Sheets (SDS)—formerly Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

Cal/OSHA requires that employees be able to easily access safety information about all hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Generally, SDS' can be downloaded by searching "SDS" followed by the name of the chemical via the Internet. They should be printed and compiled in a binder. OSHA recently adopted a new Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of classification for chemicals which manufacturers are in the process of incorporating into Safety Data Sheets. Practices must have GHS-compliant sheets by June 2015.

5. All substances labeled.

If chemicals are transferred out of their original bottle into a secondary container (such as cleaning solutions in exam rooms), every secondary bottle must contain a secondary label with content information. Secondary labels should contain the name of the chemical as well as information about potential health risks associated with exposure to it.

6. Continuous workplace safety program and evidence thereof.

Cal/OSHA wants to see more than written documents in a binder on the shelf. The agency's regulations mandate active and ongoing workplace safety programs which include:

- A designated safety coordinator who employees can report hazards and injuries to, and who also is skilled in OSHA safety and compliance topics.
- Employee safety training not only for new employees, but also on an ongoing basis for current ones. Training topics should be pertinent to the risks of the business.
- A method for reporting accidents/injuries including a documentation system and proof of hazard correction.
- Log 300, which is a work-related illness and injury reporting form that is required of all businesses with more than 10 employees. All work-related injuries which result in hospitalization for more than eight hours, or deaths that occur on-the-job, must be reported on it.

7. Unsecured shelving units.

Shelving that is over five feet tall must be secured to prevent tipping.

This is most commonly accomplished by the use of L-brackets screwed into the cabinet and affixed to the wall. Stacking heavy items on the lower portion of the cabinet or shelving is also recommended.

8. Unsecured compressed gas canisters.

Compressed gas containers must be stored away from heat sources and other highly combustible materials in a well-ventilated and dry location which prevents unauthorized access. They should be protected from falling or passing objects and secured to prevent tipping, falling, or rolling. Compressed gas containers must have a protective cap when not in use.

9. Inadequate safety self-checks and documentation.

OSHA requires periodic self-checks for purposes of hazard mitigation. They can be conducted monthly and should be documented on some form of a checklist. They should include all of the areas listed above, as well as any additional items that pose a risk of illness or injury to employees.

The CVMA Regulatory Guide is an online interactive program to assist you with your written safety plan. It is available to CVMA members and can be accessed on our website at www.cvma.net by searching “regulatory guide”. We also have additional information about OSHA compliance under the Regulatory tab.

The California Department of Industrial Relations also has a consultation branch that provides free services to assist businesses with OSHA compliance. The consultation branch is not linked to the enforcement branch. Cal/OSHA consultation can be reached at (800) 963-9424.