

Osha rules and regulations



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

OSHA refers to the Occupational Safety and Health Act enacted by the United States Congress in 1970. It was signed into law by Richard Nixon, the then United States President in December of that same year. It is a federal law that oversees the adherence to and enforcement of health and safety within the workplace in both the federal government and the private sector. Its main objective is to make sure that employees are afforded a working environment that is free of hazards such as toxic chemical substances, noise pollution, dangers from operating machines, extreme temperature differentials or generally unsanitary working conditions.

It forms an integral part of almost all the employment laws and policies throughout the United States. The Act and subsequent legislative laws following its enactment are enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration which falls under the Department of Labour of the United States Federal Government. It was created under the OSHA Act and its mission is to enforce workplace safety and health standards by the preventing injuries, illnesses and fatalities that may result from one's occupation and/or workplace environment.

It is a futile process to try and understand the benefits of OSHA Rules and Regulations without at first familiarizing ourselves with at least some of these rules and regulations. OSHA Regulations in Construction OSHA has developed guidelines and regulations for almost every single form of office in the workplace imaginable. Its regulations span from dealing with hazardous conditions to conducting work on construction sites and the inter relation between the two.

Here we shall primarily focus on OSHA rules and regulations for the construction industry. These rules and regulations are extremely numerous and as such we can only afford to tackle some of the most pertinent ones. OSHA regulations that are most pertinent to the construction industry are; * General safety and Health Provisions (1926. 20); It states in part that it is the responsibility of employers to prevent accidents. It places a burden on employers to conduct frequent inspections on their safety apparatus and equipment.

It also emphasizes that only select enterprises that have adhered to the laid down safety standards shall be allowed to operate highly sensitive or hazardous materials. * Safety Training and Education (1926. 21): It states that all employees should be given adequate training in construction safety. This training includes not only how to operate large machinery and handle hazardous materials but also how to use the equipment handed down to them to enhance their safety. * Housekeeping (1926. 5) in cases of ongoing construction all doorways, exits must be free of debris. * Means of Egress (1926. 34)

All construction sites shall have unobstructed egress from all corners of the site. Exits should be clearly marked and easily accessible to every single construction worker. * Hand Tools (1926. 301). No worker shall be permitted to use an unsafe hand tool * Other rules include the employers duty to provide a life vest when working near water, safety goggles in a work station that might interfere with a workers eyesight or be pose danger to his face through flying debris, provision of firefighting equipment and a hard hat in a site where falling debris is likely. It is important to note that here 1926 refers

to the part number of the regulation and not a year in time whereas the number that follows it refers to the specific standard number of the relations. This makes the process of referencing and counterchecking the specific regulations easier. Benefits of OSHA Rules and Regulations * Savings on Future Financial Costs:

OSHA rules and regulations are formulated to enhance a safer working environment in the workplace. This does not necessarily negate the financial viability of the company. The uptake of OSHA rules and regulations by an firm especially on within the construction industry would lead to reduced losses in form of compensation for workers due to accidents, law suits and costly settlements, cost of replacing machinery, the inconvenience of federal investigation and lost man hours which translates to forgone profits. Thus companies would rather comply with OSHA rules and regulations to offset threats on their possible future incomes. For instance, within the construction industry where falling debris, fires and heavy equipment are the norm adhering to OSHA regulations of providing hard hats, fire extinguishers and proper training would save the company costs of providing compensation to injured workers and loss of equipment or heavy machinery.

* Lower Accident Rates:

OSHA rules and regulations offer guidance and policy measures which companies can take up as part of their employee corporate policies. These rules and regulations provide expert assistance to companies as to how they can reduce the rates of accidents within their company by simply instituting managerial measures that impact factory workers or construction workers on site. These may be as simple as putting up signposts, providing necessary

equipments and putting up regulatory operational procedures in line with OSHA rules that protect the lives of workers.

Collaborations through seminars and conferences between OSHA and corporate bodies also help to iron out the legal loopholes in the sector industries thereby contributing to the development of future regulatory regimes that are more in tune with industry realities. Adhering to OSHA regulations of clear pathways in construction sites would prevent any employee from getting trapped, injured or stampeded over during an emergency where everybody is rushing to find an exit. * Managerial Benefits:

OSHA rules and regulations form the basic backbone of all rules and regulations within the workplace. Compliance and in depth knowledge of these rules means that managers of these companies are not only equipped with adequate knowledge of workplace safety standards but that they are most likely in conformity with local and state workplace safety requirements.

* Increased Motivation and Productivity amongst Workers: It is also a motivating factor amongst employees to know that they have been well taken care of and their safety is of concern to management.

This goes a long way in boosting workers morale and improving labour productivity per worker as a direct result of increased morale. Hindrance of OSHA Regulations on Business Activities and Operations Despite its seemingly endless benefits within the realm of business OSHA rules and regulations also have some substantial negative impact on business. To fully evaluate the regulations is important that we delve deep into this negative side of OSHA rules. They include: * Increased Costs Associated with the Regulations:

OSHA rules and regulations require a host of safety equipment and materials that businesses should have in their premises so as to ensure maximum possible safety for their workers. These materials do not come free but constitute an additional cost to the enterprise to procure, maintain, frequently test and repair in cases of wear and tear. These additional costs are costs outside the production process and so are merely costs and not inputs that will generate revenue.

For instance, trash cans and exit signs required within the construction industry as part of the OSHA regulations do not form any part of construction material inputs. OSHA rules and regulations also require constant review and updates within the workplace. This is undertaken either through in house trainings or seminars and conferences. These are costly to the company since in cases of in house trainings the company pays the training facilitator either through salary or allowances. The costs associated with organizing such training e. . stationery, premises, transport and accommodation all weigh down heavily on the company in terms of finances. * Loss of Competitiveness in the International Scene: These rules raise the level of cost per laborer as stated above compared to other emerging economies such as China where such regulations are not so widely practiced. The competitiveness of our labour force is lost and the production of goods and services become cheaper overseas leading to the loss of American jobs. *

Lost Man Hours and Reduced Productivity per Worker:

The OSHA rules and regulations impose a lot of procedure and guidelines to follow when undertaking any sort of business activity. This may include inspection of safety equipment, explaining of safety procedures by a

foreman to his construction workers or even clearing pathways. These processes are time consuming and in a competitive environment they mean loss of valuable man hours and thus a reduction the productivity of workers in terms of the actual hours of work that they undertake. * Multiplicity of Laws: There are federal laws, state laws and local laws all of which must be adhered to.

The OSHA regulations form part of federal laws whereas other state and local laws are in existence dealing with the same issues. This creates a dilemma that is currently facing most companies i. e. the multiplicity of laws that they have to comply with. This is quite difficult for the companies to keep up with since all these laws may at times require different interpretations and compliance procedures. * Increased Number of Law Suits and Legal Battles: The OSHA rules and regulations also lead to an increased number of legal lawsuits and protracted legal battles.

This is due to the fact that the regulations place an almost infinite number of responsibilities and duties on the company to safeguard safety in the workplace whereas it should be a combined and conscious effort of both the employer and the worker. These legal battles cost a lot of time and money and usually end up destroying the reputation of affected companies. Conclusion In conclusion it is important to make a note of the fact that OSHA rules and regulations are indeed numerous and do require a high level of legal interpretation and an even greater capacity to implement them.

However, despite it adverse impact on the business environment it is a hugely relevant and useful piece of legislation that ensures the safety of workers who form the lifeblood of our economy. The benefits of their

implementation are worth more than the costs. Thus all corporate institutions should ensure that they adhere to these rules and regulations and it is also upon workers to emphasize and seek for their implementation either individually, through their union representatives or even their elected representatives.