

# BASICS OF CAL/OSHA



Cal/OSHA is the California state program that is responsible for protecting the health and safety of workers.

Cal/OSHA, housed in the Department of Industrial Relations, has several parts:

- The **Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH)** is the agency that enforces regulations and provides consultation services.
  - The **Cal/OSHA Enforcement Unit** enforces occupational safety and health standards by responding to complaints and reports of accidents, and by conducting scheduled (programmed) inspections of certain workplaces. In some cases, it issues citations and fines.
  - The **Cal/OSHA Consultation Service** provides free technical assistance on health and safety problems to employers and employees to help employers comply with Cal/OSHA standards. The Consultation Service is separate from the Enforcement Unit and consultants do not participate in Cal/OSHA enforcement activities.
- The California **Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board** establishes health and safety standards that protect workers from injury and illness on the job.
- The California **Occupational Safety and Health Appeals Board** hears appeals from employers who receive a citation from an inspector in the Enforcement Unit.

Almost all workers in California are protected by Cal/OSHA regulations (called “standards”). This includes public employees and immigrant workers who are not legally authorized to work in California. However, some workers are not covered:

- People who are self-employed.
- Family members of farm owners who work on the family farm.
- Federal employees. These workers are covered by their own agencies which have to follow federal OSHA requirements.

Cal/OSHA protects California workers by making sure that employers comply with occupational safety and health regulations, and keep the workplace safe.

## What Are Employer Responsibilities Under Cal/OSHA?

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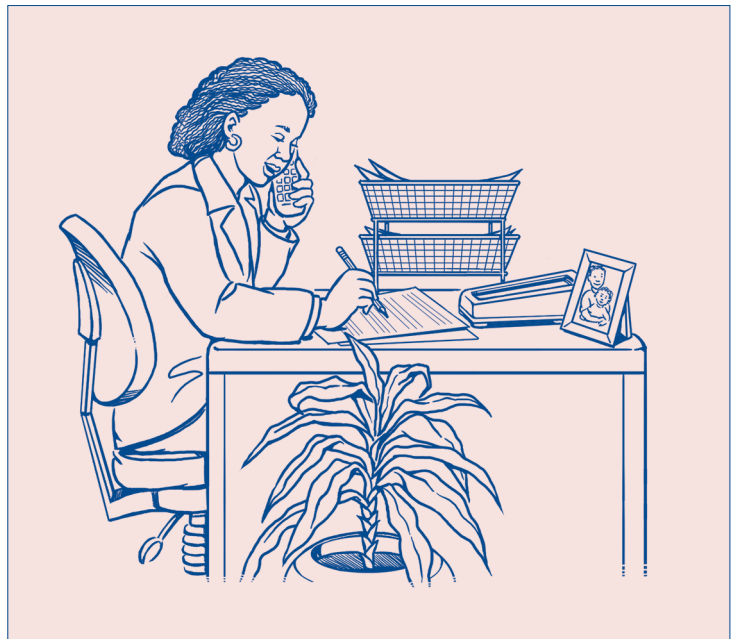
Employers must:

- Provide their employees with work and workplaces that are safe and healthy.
- Correct any hazardous conditions that they know may result in serious injury to their employees. Failure to do so could result in criminal charges, monetary penalties, and even jail time.
- Comply with all applicable Cal/OSHA standards, including any training requirements. For example, provide information and training on any chemicals used or stored at the workplace in a language and manner that are understandable to employees.
- Notify the nearest Cal/OSHA office within 8 hours of any serious injury or fatality that occurs on the job, or any serious illness caused by the job. Any in-patient hospitalization of 3 or more employees as a result of a work-related incident must also be reported right away.
- Display Cal/OSHA's *Safety and Health Protection on the Job* poster so that workers are aware of their basic rights and responsibilities. Download the poster in English from: <http://tinyurl.com//CalOSHA-Poster-English> or in Spanish from: <http://tinyurl.com//CalOSHA-Poster-Spanish>.

## What Are Employee Responsibilities?

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- Follow all safety rules and instructions.
- Use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed.
- Look out for the health and safety of co-workers.
- Keep work areas clean and neat.
- Know what to do in an emergency.
- Report any health and safety hazards to the employer.





## How Does Cal/OSHA Help Employers?

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The Cal/OSHA Consultation Service provides technical assistance to employers on health and safety problems. Consulting services include free on-site visits, assistance in complying with Cal/OSHA standards, educational seminars, and publications. Although primarily a service for employers, the Consultation Service is also available to workers.

The Consultation Service can give employers information on how to improve workplace injury and illness prevention programs and how to participate in Cal/OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). The VPP is a certification program that recognizes employers whose occupational safety and health efforts are especially effective and meet certain guidelines.

The Consultation Service is separate from the Cal/OSHA Enforcement Unit, and consultants are not involved with enforcement activities such as inspections, citations, and fines.

All communications between the employer and the Consultation Service are confidential and are not shared with enforcement staff. In exchange for this free consultation, however, employers must agree to correct in a timely manner any serious hazards that are identified.

To get help from Cal/OSHA's Consultation Service, go to [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html) or call 1-800-963-9424. Contact information for Cal/OSHA Consultation's area offices can be found at the end of this factsheet.

Cal/OSHA publications provide information about Cal/OSHA programs, standards, and general health and safety topics. You can obtain copies of Cal/OSHA publications by going to: [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp).

## What Are Cal/OSHA Standards?

Standards (regulations) describe what employers must do to protect workers from various workplace hazards. Some standards are general and apply to nearly all workplaces, such as the Injury and Illness Prevention Program standard or the Hazard Communication standard. Other standards are about specific hazards found only in some workplaces, such as the Lead, Asbestos, and Fall Protection standards. Specific standards set out detailed rules that must be followed or minimum levels of protection that must be achieved for a particular hazard.

Cal/OSHA's specific standards cover a wide variety of workplace safety issues, including:

- Tripping and falling hazards
- Toxic substances
- Machine hazards
- Heat illness prevention
- Hazardous equipment
- Electrical hazards
- Hazardous waste
- Infectious diseases
- Fire and explosion hazards
- Trenches
- Confined spaces
- Use of respirators
- Specific operations
- Ergonomics

## Finding Cal/OSHA Standards

You can find out about standards that may apply to your workplace by visiting the Cal/OSHA website at [www.dir.ca.gov](http://www.dir.ca.gov). To find standards on the Cal/OSHA website (in English):

1. Go to [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh)
2. Click on “Laws and Regulations” at the bottom of the page.
3. Click on “California Code of Regulations, Title 8.”
4. Then click on “Cal/OSHA.”
5. Scroll down until you see the “Table of Contents.”
6. Click on Subchapter 7, General Industry Safety Orders. Each of the groups listed has important requirements that may relate to your workplace. You can also type a word or phrase into the “Search *The Regulations* for:” bar.
7. You can also type a standard number into the search bar if you already know it. The full text of all Cal/OSHA standards are online.





## How Are Cal/OSHA Standards Enforced?

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Cal/OSHA enforces job safety and health standards by conducting inspections and, in some cases, issuing citations and fines. Cal/OSHA inspects workplaces when it receives a report of a death or serious injury, or when there is a complaint by an employee or employee representative.

Cal/OSHA may also inspect workplaces that are on its list of “high hazard” industries. In this case, Cal/OSHA randomly selects a workplace for inspection. Cal/OSHA may also inspect an employer because it has been identified as having a higher injury rate than other employers in its industry.

## How Are Cal/OSHA Complaints Handled?

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A complaint about a workplace hazard can be filed with Cal/OSHA by phone, fax, mail, or online. A “formal” complaint is one where the employee or employee representative gives Cal/OSHA his/her name. If the person gives a name, Cal/OSHA is required to keep it confidential.

If a worker wants to remain anonymous and does not give a name, the complaint is considered a “non-formal” complaint. Complaints from the public, including former employees of a company, are also considered non-formal.

Each complaint is classified by the Cal/OSHA Enforcement district office to determine what inspection priority the complaint should be given. Complaints about an “imminent” hazard that puts a worker in immediate danger of being killed or seriously injured are given immediate priority for investigation. Work-related deaths are also investigated immediately. Cal/OSHA gives non-formal complaints lower priority.

## What Happens During a Cal/OSHA Inspection?

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Cal/OSHA inspectors first request permission from an employer to conduct an inspection. If permission is refused, Cal/OSHA can obtain an inspection warrant. Cal/OSHA inspectors will request that the union representative be contacted and invited to accompany the employer and inspector on the inspection. If there is no union representative, the inspector must interview workers in private during the inspection. The inspection process begins with an opening conference between the Cal/OSHA inspector and the employer to gather preliminary information, discuss the reason for the inspection, describe what areas it will cover, explain the procedure, and obtain the employer’s consent to the inspection. The Cal/OSHA inspector then conducts a “walkaround” inspection. This may include looking at written records and/or conducting air monitoring. After the inspection is complete, the Cal/OSHA inspector holds a closing conference with the employer to discuss any alleged violations that were found and any requirements for correcting the hazardous conditions. The inspector will also explain any citations or fines that will be proposed.

## What Happens After a Cal/OSHA Inspection?

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After an inspection, if Cal/OSHA believes that an employer has violated any standards or regulations, the agency issues a citation. Citations describe the alleged violations, list any proposed penalties (fines), and give a deadline for correcting the hazards.

There are several categories of violations: serious, willful, repeat, failure to abate, or other-than-serious. Penalties are based on the category as well as the severity and extent of the violation. For a “serious” violation, the penalty can be up to \$25,000. Penalties can be adjusted based on the size, good faith, and history of the employer. Cal/OSHA has specific criteria it uses to evaluate an employer’s good faith.

The citation must be posted by the employer at or near each place where a serious violation occurred. For other violations, the citation must be posted in a place readily seen by all employees. It must be posted for a period of three working days or until the problem is corrected, whichever is longer.

## Can Employers Appeal Cal/OSHA Citations?

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Yes. Employers who receive a citation may appeal to the Occupational Safety and Health Appeals Board to try to change the violations cited, the penalties proposed, the deadline for correcting hazards, or the solutions required. The appeal must be made in writing within 15 working days of receiving the citation.

Unions and/or affected workers can apply to have “party status” during the employer’s appeal. They can speak at hearings and file written comments. Also, unions and/or affected workers can file their own appeals on certain issues, such as the deadline for correcting the hazards and the particular solutions Cal/OSHA has required for abatement.



## Cal/OSHA Consultation - Area Offices

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**Cal/OSHA Consultation Toll-Free Number**  
**1-800-963-9424**

<p><b>Northern California</b>                      2424 Arden Way                      Suite 410                      Sacramento, CA 95825                      916-263-0704</p>	<p><b>San Francisco Bay Area</b>                      1515 Clay Street                      Suite 1103                      Oakland, CA 94612                      510-622-2891</p>	<p><b>Central Valley</b>                      1901 North Gateway Blvd.                      Suite 102                      Fresno, CA 93727                      559-454-1295</p>
<p><b>San Fernando Valley</b>                      6150 Van Nuys Blvd.                      Suite 307                      Van Nuys, CA 91401                      818-901-5754</p>	<p><b>Los Angeles</b>                      1 Centerpointe Drive                      Suite 150                      La Palma, CA 90623                      714-562-5525</p>	<p><b>San Bernardino, Orange</b>                      464 W. 4th Street                      Suite 339                      San Bernardino, CA 92401                      909-383-4567</p>
<p><b>San Diego</b>                      7575 Metropolitan Drive                      Suite 204                      San Diego, CA 92108                      619-767-2060</p>		

## Cal/OSHA District Offices

<p><b>American Canyon District Office</b> 3419 Broadway St. Suite H8 American Canyon, CA 94503 707-649-3700 Fax 707-649-3712</p>	<p><b>Long Beach District Office</b> 3939 Atlantic Ave., Suite 212 Long Beach, CA 90807  562-506-0810 Fax 562-426-8340</p>	<p><b>Redding Field Office</b> 381 Hemsted Drive Redding, CA 96002  530-224-4743 Fax 530-224-4747</p>	<p><b>Santa Ana District Office</b> 2000 E. McFadden Ave. Suite 122 Santa Ana, CA 92705  714-558-4451 Fax 714-558-2035</p>
<p><b>Bakersfield District Office</b> 7718 Meany Ave. Bakersfield, CA 93308  661-588-6400 Fax 661-588-6428</p>	<p><b>Los Angeles District Office</b> 320 W. 4th Street Suite 670 Los Angeles, CA 90013  213-576-7451 Fax 213-576-7461</p>	<p><b>Sacramento District Office</b> 2424 Arden Way Suite 165 Sacramento, CA 95825  916-263-2800 Fax 916-263-2798</p>	<p><b>Van Nuys District Office</b> 6150 Van Nuys Blvd. Suite 405 Van Nuys, CA 91401  818-901-5403 Fax 818-901-5578</p>
<p><b>Foster City District Office</b> 1065 E. Hillsdale Blvd. Suite 110 Foster City, CA 94404  650-573-3812 Fax 650-573-3817</p>	<p><b>Modesto District Office</b> 4206 Technology Drive Suite 3 Modesto, CA 95356  209-545-7310 Fax 209-545-7313</p>	<p><b>San Bernardino District Office</b> 464 West 4th Street Suite 332 San Bernardino, CA 92401  909-383-4321 Fax 909-383-6789</p>	
<p><b>Fremont District Office</b> 39141 Civic Center Drive Suite 310 Fremont, CA 94538-5818  510-794-2521 Fax 510-794-3889</p>	<p><b>Monrovia District Office</b> 800 Royal Oaks Dr., Suite 105 Monrovia, CA 91016 626-239-0369 Fax 626-239-0387</p>	<p><b>San Diego District Office</b> 7575 Metropolitan Drive Suite 207 San Diego, CA 92108  619-767-2280 Fax 619-767-2299</p>	
<p><b>Fresno District Office</b> 2550 Mariposa Street Suite 4000 Fresno, CA 93721  559-445-5302 Fax 559-445-5786</p>	<p><b>Oakland District Office</b> 1515 Clay Street Suite 1303 Oakland, CA 94612  510-622-2916 Fax 510-622-2908</p>	<p><b>San Francisco District Office</b> 455 Golden Gate Ave. Room 9516 San Francisco, CA 94102  415-557-0100 Fax 415-557-0123</p>	<p><b>For more information, visit</b> <a href="http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/DistrictOffices.htm">http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/DistrictOffices.htm</a></p>

This factsheet was adapted in part from the Division of Occupational Safety and Health's "User's Guide to Cal/OSHA" and "Peterson and Cohen's Cal/OSHA Sourcebook 2004". Some material is from "Know Your Rights Under OSHA" by the National Committees for Occupational Safety and Health Network. The content and language were reviewed by Cal/OSHA staff.