

OSHA: PROTECTING WORKERS'
HEALTH AND SAFETY



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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the acronym “OSHA,” explain what OSHA does, and name the agency responsible for workplace health and safety in your state.
- Describe or state where to find out more about OSHA, OSHA standards, and where to seek OSHA help, including the website and the hotline.
- Discuss the benefits of an effective safety and health program, including roles for employee involvement.
- Name four elements of an effective safety and health program.

Time Needed: 30 Minutes

Materials Needed

- Internet access to the OSHA website
- Computer(s) to explore the website
- Handouts *OSHA Website Worksheet (A)*
 OSHA Inspection Information Worksheet (B)
- Consider inviting an OSHA representative to present to the class (optional)

Preparing to Teach this Lesson

Before you present this lesson:

- Locate and review the sections of the OSHA website identified in activity C prior to teaching the lesson.
- Sign up for computer lab ahead of time if your room has limited internet access.
- Make photocopies of handouts you will be using with your students.
- Locate and review the sections of the OSHA website identified in activity C prior to teaching the lesson.

Detailed Instructor's Notes

A. Introduction: Why is this subject important? (5 minutes)

1. Discuss why OSHA is important.
 - Workplace injury and illness is an enormous problem:
 - Each year approximately 6,000 US workers die from injuries and 50,000 die from illnesses related to work; 6 million workers suffer non-fatal workplace injuries
 - Young and new workers are injured at higher rates than older and more experienced workers
 - OSHA plays a key role in addressing this problem:
 - Since 1970, the fatality rate has been cut in half under OSHA's watch
 - In industries where OSHA concentrates its attention, there are reduced overall injury and illness rates

B. What OSHA does (10 minutes)

1. OSHA's role:

- OSHA is both a federal law and the name of an agency. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is an agency of the United States Department of Labor. It was created by Congress under the Occupational Safety and Health Act on December 29, 1970. Its mission is to prevent work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths by issuing and enforcing rules (called standards) for workplace safety and health.
- Depending on the state, either federal OSHA or a comparable state agency carries out the law. In Washington State, for example, the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) in the Department of Labor & Industries has this role. A state that takes responsibility must have standards and enforcement that are at least as effective as federal OSHA standards.
- OSHA has a number of responsibilities:
 - OSHA encourages employers and employees to reduce workplace hazards and to create or improve health and safety programs in the workplace
 - OSHA also develops and enforces mandatory job safety and health standards (regulations) in several areas:
 - General industry
 - Construction
 - Maritime
 - Some agricultural activities
 - Even when there is no specific standard for a hazard, under the federal OSHA law every employer is required to “furnish...a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees.” This is called the “General Duty Clause,” and it protects all workers.
 - OSHA operates a reporting and recordkeeping system to keep track of job-related injuries and illnesses
 - OSHA provides information, technical assistance, training, and other support to help employers and workers.

2. OSHA provides a framework, but in the workplace every employer must have its own health and safety program. Good programs do the following

- Prevent injuries (pain, suffering, need for workers' compensation)
- Increase employee morale
- Increase productivity

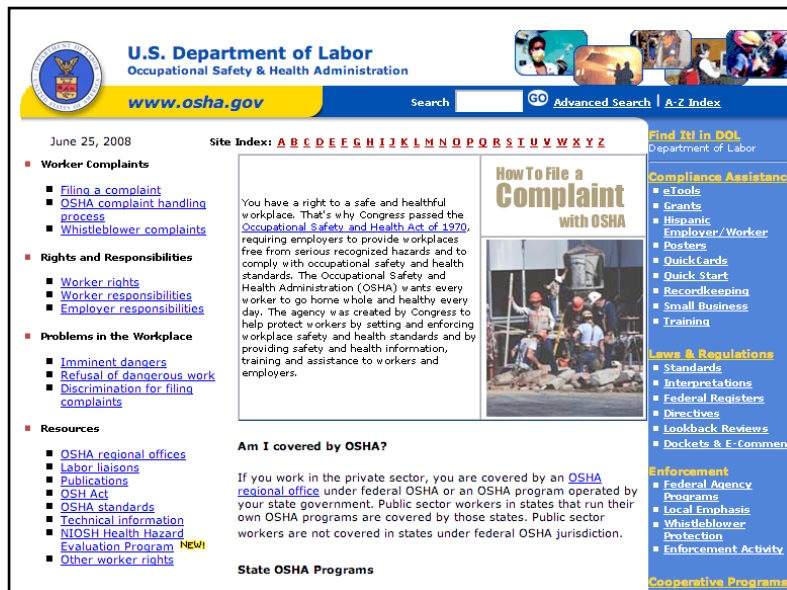
Health and safety programs that work have these things in common:

- Commitment from management
- Employee involvement in identifying problems and solutions
- Hazard analysis (surveys, checklists) in the workplace
- Plans for addressing the hazards
- Strong communication at all levels of the workplace.

C. Review the OSHA website (20 minutes)

Instructor's note: If the classroom has good Internet access and there are enough computers for all students to participate, consider doing one of the following exercises as a classroom activity. If Internet access is limited, demonstrate the website to the students and assign one of the exercises as a homework assignment.

1. There are 2 ways to contact OSHA. One way is by phone (call 1-800-321-OSHA). The other way is through the OSHA website. The OSHA website has an enormous amount of information. Starting with the home page (www.osha.gov), click on the "Workers" link on the left side of the page. Ask students to find the following and complete the worksheet at the end of this module:
 - Determine if their state has a state OSHA program (24 states plus Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands do)
 - Find the contacts for the state plan or for federal OSHA in their state



- Find information about the safety and health rights of workers
 - Find how to file a complaint with OSHA
2. Now click on the Teen Workers link on the left side of the page and have students answer the next question on the worksheet;

What are the leading causes of deaths on the job for teen workers?

- Point out "Potential Hazards: Real Stories," about halfway down the teen worker page, for stories of real accidents to young workers in a variety of industries. Discuss the resources and information on the site.
- Find the link to the Teen Worker Safety in Restaurants e-tool on the Teen Worker page and go there. Move the cursor around to discover the different hazards and resources and learn how an e-tool works. Answer the last question on the worksheet.

3. Optional activities for classroom or homework assignment.

Instructor’s note: The OSHA website can answer many other questions, but you must know how to search it. The following activity will allow students to look deeper into specific workplaces and standards, but this will take more time and may sometimes lead to dead ends. However, these activities can also turn up information directly related to workplaces that the students know about.

Optional Activity:

Finding information about a specific workplace.

Almost every workplace that OSHA has inspected will have a record that can be accessed through the OSHA website. Students should choose a workplace where they have worked or where a parent has worked. If none of these produce a hit in the OSHA database, they can try the school itself or a well-known establishment in the area. You may want to look in the database beforehand and identify a few well-known businesses that have been inspected. Suggest students check these if they don’t find any on their own. To access the inspection information do the following:

- On the OSHA home page (www.osha.gov) go to the right hand column to Statistics/ Inspection Data
- Click the “Establishment Search” link
- Type in the name of the establishment you are interested in. The search needs to match the name in the data base, so you may need to try different terms. Choose the state and the date range you want. A wider date range will increase the likelihood of finding an inspection.
- Once students have found a workplace with a record, they should answer the following questions:

a. Name of company _____

b. When was it inspected _____

c. Why was it inspected? Was it following an accident or injury? Was it in response to an employee complaint? _____

d. Were any violations of OSHA standards found? If yes, what hazards or rules did the violation pertain to? _____

e. How serious was the violation? Did the employer have to pay a fine? _____

OSHA Website Worksheet

Answer the following questions by starting at www.osha.gov and following the right links.

1. Does the state where you live have a state OSHA plan?

If yes, what is the main contact information for the state OSHA agency?

2. List at least four of the main worker safety and health rights under OSHA:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

3. How can you file a complaint with OSHA?

4. In the restaurant e-tool, what are the hazards that seem to be common regardless of what job or part of the restaurant you're working in?

OSHA Inspection Information Worksheet

1. Name of company _____

2. When was it inspected? _____

3. Why was it inspected? _____

Was it following an accident or injury? _____

Was it in response to an employee complaint? _____

4. Were any violations of OSHA standards found? _____

If yes what hazards or rules did the violation pertain to? _____

How serious was the violation? _____

Did the employer have to pay a fine? How much? _____

