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For Your Safety

Safety Training May Prevent Costly OSHA Citations

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently cited a major piping company in Texas for three serious violations and four repeat violations. This happened after an employee at the piping company was injured by a mechanical press' broken die piece. The combined total of the citations was almost \$200,000.

For the repeat violations, the company had failed to guard band saws and punch presses. They also failed to provide lockout/tagout education about energized sources to employees. In addition to this, they failed to conduct an annual review of such procedures. If an employer has been cited for an offense previously and commits the same one or a similar offense, a repeat violation citation is issued. This includes any of the employer's other facilities in states where there are federal enforcement laws, and it applies for the past five years. In this specific case, the company had received citations in 2011.

The company was cited for failing to use undamaged slings for moving and lifting equipment and failing to secure a fuel gas cylinder. They also did not provide proper strain relief for their electrical wiring. If there is a substantial risk of serious physical harm or death as a result of a condition that an employer knew about but did not fix, it is considered a serious one.

There were about 700 employees at the company receiving the citations. The company made clamps, expansion joints and pipe supports for oil refineries. In 2011, the company was inspected twice. Citations were issued for failing to guard the operation points on the press brakes, shears and band saws. Although the 2011 cases were settled, the company's 2013 citations were contested. Every company can learn a lesson from this case. It is important to know how to avoid these types of risks.

OSHA has the 29 CFR 1910.147 available on their site, which provides training for lockout/tagout procedures. The program was developed between multiple departments and compliance officers. This information is designed to give new and seasoned workers the knowledge they need to stay safe and conduct lockout/tagout procedures correctly. To ensure thorough training, there are three components. There is a tutorial that explains everything in a question-and-answer format. A section outlining hot topics contains several abstracts and discussions of the major issues. In addition to this, there are also seven simulated case studies. Readers will make decisions based on the information they receive.

Machine guarding is another important issue, and OSHA provides information about this topic on their site. Moving parts in machines can severely injure or kill workers, so they should be properly trained to know how to avoid injuries. Any machine part that could hurt a worker should be safeguarded. When injuries happen, employers have a responsibility to control or eliminate the machines causing the injuries. OSHA offers general information about motion hazards of machines and proper techniques for safeguarding them. Standards are highlighted, and there are many links providing information about specific types of machines.

If a company is cited by OSHA, the business has 15 working days from the time the citation was issued to comply or request a conference with an area director. Conferences should be scheduled if the company feels there was an error and wants to contest the findings. To learn more about compliance standards and the consequences of failing to comply, discuss concerns with an agent.



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