

BAYLOR BULLETIN

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CHANGES TO GROUP-RATING?



Many of you have seen the newspaper articles concerning the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas order to change the Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) group-rating system effective July 1, 2009. The BWC is currently engaged in a rating reform program to strengthen the

same group-rating program the court wants to change. To read more on BWC reform go to www.ohiobwc.com/reform. The reform program includes caps and limits to protect employers who incur a premium increase due to the loss of a group-rating discount. These changes are scheduled to

take effect July 1, 2009 with other changes over the next two years. The BWC reform should solve the problems the court identified with group-rating without placing an immediate hardship on the over 100,000 employers currently in the program.

PROFESSIONAL SAFETY AUDITS

What is a professional Safety Audit and how can your company benefit?

A safety audit is an evaluation of current policies, procedures, training records and other documentation designed to establish policies and procedures that may be required by your business, whether it is a manufacturing facility, construction company, retail establishment or other service-related business, to ensure OSHA regulations are met. It is also an evaluation of workplace conditions to be used to minimize or eliminate potential hazardous conditions, ensuring employees have and use safe and properly maintained tools and

equipment, including their Personal Protective Equipment.

Here are three actual situations which illustrate the benefits of a professional safety audit.

Example 1: Employee Complaint to OSHA

The company has no safety or health policies in place and training has not been conducted on Lockout/Tagout, Hazard Communications, Emergency Plan, Fire Plan, or Powered Industrial Trucks.

OSHA sends a letter to the company explaining employee complaint and requesting documentation. This company is in the clear and can prove it. Having had a professional Safety Audit conducted six months prior, the

company was able to provide information including sign-off sheets, indicating all employees had attended the required training. Result: no inspection or citation from OSHA.

Example 2: Accident Results in Amputation

After this accident, OSHA visited the facility and the immediate area where the accident occurred. Although the injured employee admitted fault, OSHA informed the company that they would conduct a wall-to-wall inspection.

Fortunately, a professional Safety Audit had been conducted at the company, prior to the OSHA inspection. This Safety Audit found 35 violations, which the

Questions on
Group-Rating?
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January 1-2

company immediately corrected. During the OSHA inspection, only two violations were found, resulting in citations totaling \$2200.

Had the safety audit not been conducted earlier, fines may have exceeded \$20,000 for violations.

Example 3: Employee Complaint to OSHA

The company has some equipment that is unsafe to operate and the potential for serious injury to someone exists.

OSHA visited the facility and after examining the said equipment, it was found unsafe to operate. They then decided to look at all similar equipment. The OSHA inspector decided that the similar equipment was safe for operation. However, he found other violations that resulted in fines totaling \$22,000. An additional \$5,000 was spent to abate the violations. A professional safety audit had not been conducted

at this facility prior to the OSHA inspection. These are all actual events that occurred in the last seven months. Would you like to learn more about professional safety audits and how your company can benefit?

Contact Ken Gould at Gould Group Safety Consulting, 330-206-3397 or visit www.gouldgroupsafetyconsulting.com.

KEY SAFETY PROGRAM PARAMETERS

Orientation and training for all employees.

Determine the specific training needs of your employees including supervisors, managers and team leaders.

Develop a written safety and health training plan that documents specific training objectives and instruction procedures.

New employee orientation should include a review of the Safety and Health Policy and the safety and health responsibilities of the employee. Orientate employees on proper procedures for reporting injuries or illnesses (See related information on new OSHA injury recording standard) and actions to take in case of emergencies. Provide employees with a method to report unsafe work practices or conditions and explain the return to work procedures. The orientation process must be documented and signed by the employee.

Safety and health training must include specific job/task safe work practices and hazard

recognition. Training should cover procedures for the safe and efficient use of machinery and tools. Train employees when applicable on hazard communication, bloodborne pathogens, lockout/tagout, hot work permit and confined-space entry. Provide training for new, current and transferred employees and when new substances, equipment, processes or procedures are introduced into the workplace. All training must be documented with the date, topic, instructor's name and signatures of employees in attendance.

Published safe work practices so that employees have a clear understanding of how to safely accomplish their job requirements. Both general and job specific safe work practices must be identified, documented and made available. Employees must be provided a copy of the general safe work practices and they should sign a statement indicating that they have read, understand and will

follow the practices. Examples of general safe work practices expected of employees include: Practicing good housekeeping; Wearing personal protective equipment; Applying first-aid procedures (if trained); Using good ergonomic principles; Wearing respiratory protection; Using and following lockout/tagout procedures; Using and following confined-spaced entry; Using hazard communication; Avoiding bloodborne pathogens, if applicable.

Job-specific safe work practices apply to operations that involve recognized hazards and risks associated with specific job functions and procedures. Job-specific safe work practices must be posted or made readily available in the work area. Each department manager should review the safe work practices with the employees on a recurring basis, at least annually.