



Safe-T-Net, Inc.



OSHA Compliance and Accident Prevention Are Not the Same Thing

If someone offered you the following two options, which would you choose?

The first option: You get 25% of whatever you save your company over the next 12 months from an overhead expense of \$7821

The second option: You get 25% of whatever you save your company over the next 12 months from an overhead expense of \$3,200,892.

No brainer, right? To make a point, I offered these options to a group of managers and supervisors at a contractor's annual meeting. Of course everyone chose the second option. I then asked what these overhead expenses represented to their company. Nobody in the group could tell me. Can you? The \$7821 represented the amount this contractor paid in O.S.H.A. penalties during a five year period

The \$3,200,892 represented the direct incurred costs (amount paid and reserved for insurance claims) of employee accidents, automobile accidents, and liability claims for this contractor during the same five year period.

Think about it. Maybe you are inspected by O.S.H.A. several times a year. If you have a decent safety program, haven't had a repeat violation, show good faith and negotiate, you'll get a significant discount on an O.S.H.A. penalty. If you have a proactive O.S.H.A. training program for your supervisors, the number of violations should be minimal.

What's my point? You can be in compliance with O.S.H.A. and still be hurting people on your projects. That's because compliance with O.S.H.A. standards is not enough to have a truly safe, accident free jobsite. First, O.S.H.A. standards are minimum standards. Also, these standards don't address the most frequent cause of employee accidents- unsafe behavior.

For example: Your dozer operator stops for lunch. He grounds his blade, unbuckles his seat belt, stands up and "jumps" out of his cab. Since he was wearing a seat belt, has rollover protection, a functioning back-up alarm and horn, O.S.H.A. is tickled to death. But if you're this guy's supervisor, are you happy? You better not be. Getting on and off of equipment is the most hazardous thing he will do. I've seen broken ankles, torn knee ligaments, strained backs, from this one activity. If you don't stop this unsafe behavior, you will be looking for a new equipment operator.

The supervisor must manage the jobsite hazards. One of the best ways to manage hazards is to start each day with a 5 minute pre-work meeting. This is when you talk to your crew about things like proper mounting and dismounting of equipment. Read my article on Daily Pre-Work Meetings for more information.

Complying with O.S.H.A. standards is very important and contractors need to make sure they've met these minimum standards. But if you want to keep your employees safe and working, you'd better manage your hazards, including employees' unsafe behavior.

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