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Health & Safety

HOW TO CONDUCT A WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY INSPECTION

Knowing how to do your own workplace health and safety inspection can be a valuable tool. This fact sheet is a guide for conducting an informal survey of your workplace.

Why do your own inspection?

No matter what your workplace is like – unionized or unorganized, factory, warehouse or office – there are many advantages to doing periodic health and safety inspections.

A primary reason is to increase your odds of winning grievances and CAL/ OSHA complaints.

Documentation can increase your bargaining power and lessen chances that management will shoot holes in your arguments. Inspections can also be used as an organizing tool to activate and educate members. Problems uncovered may serve as excellent issues to organize around.

Can any worker conduct inspections?

Yes, but how an inspection is done and who carries it out will depend on the circumstances of your workplace. In unorganized workplaces that are highly structured, the inspection may have to be carried out cautiously on breaks or during lunch, or perhaps even by talking to co-workers in other departments before or after work.

In a unionized workplace contract language or past practices might give members the leeway to carry out a more direct inspection. Unionized workers also have the legal right to bring someone into the workplace to do the inspection. This could be an industrial hygienist, or a union member. Let's look at how your inspection should proceed:

I. SET YOUR GOALS –

Your first step should be to set your goals, priorities and tasks. These will depend somewhat on the nature of your workplace. For example, are you looking primarily for chemical exposure problems or safety hazards? Are there co-workers in certain departments that should be involved in your inspection?

II. USE A CHECKLIST –

Make a checklist with standard questions that fit your workplace. This list can serve as a guide for the inspection and will give you

a reference point for future inspections. For examples of questions to use, see the sample workplace inspection checklist.

III. KEEP DETAILED NOTES –

Keep detailed notes on all observations – on what you see, hear and smell. Record the hazard, its location and who is affected. Write down whether it occurs daily or at special times. For example, do people feel sick when returning to work after a weekend? Is there one area in the shop where workers report symptoms more often? Note what management says or does about hazards.

IV. INSPECT DOCUMENTS –

Certain documents contain information you can see. Request copies of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) from management for materials you suspect may be hazardous. You have the right to this information under the Right to Know Act. Cal/OSHA 200 Logs (for workplaces of ten or more employees) will tell you what injuries and illness are occurring in the workplace – according to the employer. You can request Cal/ OSHA 200 Logs anytime from your employer.

V. GET OTHERS INVOLVED –

Involving co-workers is a good way to maximize your access to information. It also helps build unity and understanding around health and safety – not always the easiest task.

What to do with your findings

More than likely, your inspection will lead to a long list of health and safety hazards. When deciding how to proceed, consider several factors: What are the most dangerous hazards? Which hazards affects the most people? Which hazards would be the easiest (or most difficult) to correct? What are co-workers most interested in and motivated around?

This is also a good time to consider possible solutions, such as safer chemical substitutes, modified work stations, improving ventilation systems, or providing personal protective equipment.

There are a number of ways to tackle the problem:

- File grievances if your contract already has health and safety clauses. Remember

over please

If you think your rights have been violated, contact your local CSUEU steward

that past practices can also be grieved. Group grievances, in which a number of people sign on, can give you more bargaining power.

- File Cal/OSHA complaints if the employer is in violation of regulations. Cal/OSHA will investigate a complaint by conducting an investigation of their own.
- Organize campaigns and direct action. For example, have workers wear tee shirts or buttons to work declaring, "This Job is Dangerous To My Health!" Or use a petition campaign to build support and show management that people are united. Informational pickets may also be effective, especially if

your workplace is located in a highly visible area.

A union's legal right to inspect

Health and safety issues fall under the category of working conditions. The employer must also allow the union access to the information it needs to represent members, administer contracts and bargain for new agreements. Therefore, if the union needs information on health and safety, it has the right to access it.

The right to health and safety information includes the right to bring your own health and safety specialist into the workplace to do an inspection.

WORKPLACE INSPECTION

Take a look at this health and safety inspection checklist
(for unsafe acts or conditions)

Location: _____

Inspected by: _____ **Title:** _____ **Date:** _____

	Rating 1-2-3-4-N/A		Rating 1-2-3-4-N/A
1. Housekeeping		Earplugs or muffs	_____
Aisles, stairs, floors, walkways, holes, obstructions, guardrails, barriers	_____	Gloves	_____
Storage and piling of materials	_____	Respirators	_____
Exits, ramps, platforms, driveways, window, ledges	_____	Protective clothing	_____
Load heights, projections of materials, receiving of materials	_____	Work clothes cleaned properly	_____
Structural conditions <i>(rusting, cracks, foundation deficiencies)</i>	_____	Hard Hats	_____
Lighting	_____	Employee safety awareness	_____
Wash and locker rooms	_____	Other	_____
Ventilation, air conditioning	_____	5. Chemicals	
Disposal of waste <i>(including toxic materials if applicable)</i>	_____	Storage	_____
Yards, parking	_____	Handling	_____
Work areas	_____	Protective clothing	_____
Noise levels	_____	Accessibility and availability of fire protection, eyewash, shower	_____
Other	_____	Other	_____
2. Fire Protection		6. Material handling	
Extinguishing equipment	_____	Power truck, hand trucks	_____
Standpipes, hoses, sprinkler heads	_____	Cranes, hoists	_____
Stairs	_____	Ladders, platforms, scaffolds	_____
Signs	_____	Conveyors, screening chambers	_____
Storage of flammable material	_____	Cables, ropes, chains	_____
Other	_____	Elevators	_____
3. Tools		Other	_____
Condition of power tools, hand tools	_____	7. Electrical	
Wiring	_____	Proper three-wire grounding or double insulated tools	_____
Use and storage of tools	_____	Proper tagging procedures and locking out of equipment	_____
Purchasing standards	_____	Use of "G.F.I." in wet clothes	_____
Other	_____	Batteries <i>(proper handling and refilling)</i>	_____
4. Personal equipment and hygiene		Proper testing equipment	_____
Goggles and face shields	_____	Insulation	_____
Safety shoes	_____	Switch gear, wiring devices, circuits, switchboard and equipment	_____
		Other	_____

8. Machinery

Point of operator guards
Belts, pulleys, gears, shafts
Couplings, sprockets, chains, flywheels
frames, brakes, feeding
Oil, cleaning, adjusting
Maintenance, oil leakage
Locking devices and latches intact?
Other

Work on unguarded or moving machinery
Excessively worn out or tractionless work shoes
General work practices
Is additional safety training required?
If "yes", in what areas:
Other

9. Pressure equipment

Steam equipment, boilers
Air receivers and compressors
Gas cylinders, air hoses
Welding equipment
(torch hoses, cylinders, flashback arresters, valves)
Safety valves
Other

12. First Aid

First aid kits
Stretchers and fire blankets
Oxygen resuscitator
Reporting of injuries
Emergency Equipment Safety Board
(all items checked)
Other

10. Safety bulletin board

Neat and attractive
Display changed regularly
Well-illuminated
Official notices posted,
(OSHA, right to know law, etc.)
Other

13. Office safety

Cleanliness
Aisle space
Exposed wire, overutilized electrical outlets
Storage and piling of materials
Lighting
Lavatories
Ventilation, air conditioning
Fire extinguishers, first aid kits
Noise levels
General office safety habits
Furniture (condition of)
Exits (clearly marked and accessible)
Waste disposal
Other

11. Unsafe practices (frequently observed)

Excessive speed of vehicles
Improper lifting
Smoking in dangerous areas
Horseplay
Running in aisles or on stairs
Improper use of air hoses
Removing machine or other guards

14. Miscellaneous

Has anything been overlooked?
When is the next meeting scheduled?



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION • California State University Employees Union/CSEA

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PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT

Chapter _____

Form with fields for Social Security No., Last Name, First Name, Initial, Number and Street, City, Zip Code, Employed by, Department or Campus - work location, Room No., Classification, E-mail, Business Phone, Home Phone, and Recruiter Name (optional).

I hereby apply for membership in the California State University Employees Union (SEIU 2579 - CSEA), an affiliate of CSEA, and hereby agree to abide by the CSUEU Bylaws and Policies, including those of the CSEA Policy File. In becoming a member I authorize CSUEU to establish with the appropriate agency the withholding from my pay or retirement allowance of dues and any benefit deductions. I understand that my membership rights are set forth in the Policy files of CSUEU and CSEA, which are subject to amendment, and are affected by applicable labor contract(s) ("A Memorandum of Understanding" or "MOU") between CSUEU and the California State University, and a copy of the Policy Files and applicable MOU are always available to me by contacting CSUEU Headquarters, 1108 O Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, California 95814. Should an applicable MOU provide for the maintenance of membership, I understand that I must remain a member for the duration of the MOU, except that I may terminate membership during the last thirty (30) days of such MOU.

Unless instructed to the contrary below, CSUEU is hereby authorized to withhold from my pay an additional \$2.00 per month for CSUEU's non-partisan political activity.



By writing my initials in this box I instruct CSUEU NOT to withhold an additional \$2.00 per month for political activity.

Signature: _____

Date: _____