

## TOOL KIT FOR TAKING ACTION

# TIPS FOR REPORTING WORKPLACE HAZARDS TO CAL/OSHA



Workers may be in situations where their health and safety are at risk and they want to get help from an agency. Workers have the right to file a complaint with Cal/OSHA, the agency in charge of enforcing health and safety regulations in California workplaces. Cal/OSHA will investigate or inspect a workplace if workers file complaints of unsafe conditions or violations of health and safety standards.

### **You can report workplace health and safety problems by phone or email**

- Locate the Cal/OSHA office closest to your worksite by entering your zip code on the Cal/OSHA website, <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/complaint.htm>, or by calling 1-844-522-6734.
- Then call or email the local Cal/OSHA office.

## **Your information is confidential**

Cal/OSHA will not tell your employer who called. Workers have the right to file a complaint anonymously, without giving their name. However, if you provide your name and contact information, Cal/OSHA has more tools to follow up and investigate. Giving your name can be useful because the inspector can call you if they have any questions. The results of the investigation will also be sent to you.

Workers can file the complaint on their own, or they can do so with the help of their union or a community organization.

## **Be prepared to provide key information**

The more information you can provide, the better Cal/OSHA can help you. Tell Cal/OSHA:

- ☑ The name of your employer or company and the kind of work you are doing
- ☑ The work location so Cal/OSHA can find your workplace
- ☑ About the health and safety problem with as many details as possible and how it affects you and other workers
- ☑ The number of workers at the site and what languages they speak
- ☑ The days and times of work shifts, especially if the problem occurs only during certain shifts or certain processes that do not occur every day

## **What will Cal/OSHA do?**

Cal/OSHA inspectors will investigate the complaint and may come to the worksite if they believe the employer is violating worker health and safety standards or if workers are in danger of illness or injury. They will ask the employer and workers questions to find out more about the hazards. You have a right to talk with the inspector in private. Get the inspector's phone number if you prefer to talk when you are not at work.

- Tell the inspector about any problems and any changes that are needed to protect your health — you are the expert about conditions at your job. If the inspector doesn't speak your language, he or she will request an interpreter.
- If it is determined that the employer has violated a health and safety standard, Cal/OSHA will give a citation and fine to the employer when the inspection is completed, which will likely be several weeks to months later. The employer must fix the problem by a specific date.

- Your employer must display the inspection results so affected workers will know what the employer must do to fix the problems.
- Call Cal/OSHA after the inspection if you do not see any changes after the employer's deadline is reached, to let them know the problems still exist.

**If you are helping workers with  
a Cal/OSHA complaint, you can...**

- Help them document the problem and prepare to explain to Cal/OSHA where the worksite is located, when the work occurs, what the problems are and who is affected. Photos, written notes and other details are helpful.
- Help them contact the Cal/OSHA district office nearest the worksite to make a complaint.
- Educate and involve as many workers as possible in the process so they are prepared to talk with Cal/OSHA inspectors. If workers are more comfortable talking with an inspector away from their workplace, help arrange a time and place so they can meet confidentially.
- Develop a relationship with Cal/OSHA, including the district office staff. Call them ahead of submitting the complaint to provide some background and introduce yourself as a resource.
- Provide your name and phone number on the complaint as well as your relationship to the workers. This is helpful because the staff will know they can contact you for more information.
- Follow up after the complaint is filed and after any inspection. Gather additional documentation as needed.
- If you are a union representative or shop steward, participate in the Cal/OSHA inspection.
- If the employer appeals a citation or fine, request to participate in the appeals process.
- Workers have the right to contact Cal/OSHA without fear of reprisal. If they experience retaliation, help them contact the nearest office of the Labor Commissioner within a year.