

OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program Helps Small Businesses Establish Safety and Health Programs

It's confidential, free, voluntary, and convenient: consultants perform evaluations on-site

Employers can find out about potential hazards at their worksites, improve their occupational safety and health management system, and qualify for an exemption from scheduled [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA) enforcement inspections when they request assistance from the agency's free, confidential, and voluntary [On-Site Consultation Program](#). OSHA's consultation service is available through state agencies or universities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several U.S. Territories. The highly trained safety and occupational health professionals work with employers to identify workplace hazards, provide advice on compliance with OSHA standards, and assist in establishing workplace safety and health management programs.

On average, OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program conducts approximately 28,000 visits annually to worksites nationwide. Each year, corrective actions taken by employers subsequent to these visits, result in nearly 3 million workers being removed from the over 130,000 serious hazards identified during consultations.

This safety and health consultation program is completely separate from the OSHA enforcement inspection effort. In addition, no citations are issued nor penalties proposed by consultants in the On-Site Consultation Program. It's confidential, too. The employer's name, information about the workplace, plus any unsafe or unhealthful working conditions that the consultant uncovers, will not be reported to the OSHA inspection staff. Although, employers working with an On-Site Consultation Program are obligated to correct any serious job safety and health hazards – an agreement which employers must make before the consultation begins.

To take advantage of this resource, an employer requests a consultation visit and determines the scope of the visit they want to receive. The visit may focus on a single concern at a facility, or it may involve a comprehensive hazard assessment to establish a facility-wide safety and health management system. OSHA grants employers working with an On-Site Consultation Project a deferral from programmed enforcement inspections from the date of the opening conference to the end of the period mutually established by the consultant and the employer for the correction of hazards.

Companies that have worked with the OSHA On-Site Consultation Program benefit from the experience in numerous ways. In addition to improvements regarding the welfare of workers, the bottom lines of companies often benefit because of lowered injury and illness rates, decreased workers' compensation costs, reduction of lost workdays, and reductions in equipment damage and product losses.

A small business employer may become eligible for another great benefit – recognition by OSHA and the state through participation in the [Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program \(SHARP\)](#). SHARP recognizes small employers who operate an exemplary safety and health management system. Acceptance into SHARP by OSHA is an achievement that singles out a business amongst its peers as a model for worksite safety and health. Upon receiving SHARP recognition, a worksite is exempt from programmed inspections during the period that its SHARP certification is valid.

For more information about OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program, including SHARP participation, call (800) 321-6742 (OSHA) or visit the agency's webpage at www.osha.gov/consultation to find the contact details for your state.