

CHAPTER 3

WORKSITE EVALUATION

Introduction

Routine onsite evaluation of the workplace by qualified occupational health professionals provides an essential element of any comprehensive occupational safety and health program. Per section 0802.2 of OPNAVINST 5100.23 series, an annual survey of each workplace is to be made by the cognizant industrial hygienist - i.e., the walk through survey for all potentially hazardous Navy work centers. The survey should contain a description of the work operations and work practices, a list of known hazardous materials, a list of potential physical and biological hazards, and a description of existing controls and their efficiency.

In addition, onsite workplace evaluation may be performed by occupational health (OH) nurses and/or physicians in a number of situations: in response to a specific employee's complaints or concerns, to investigate an apparent cluster of pattern of related complaints in two or more employees, or as part of a periodic worksite inspection schedule.

Worksite Visit Preparation

In preparation for a scheduled worksite visit, OH professionals should familiarize themselves with all relevant data. Such data may include, but should not necessarily be limited to:

1. Review of the most recent industrial hygiene (IH) survey report for the work center, and if applicable, the corresponding medical surveillance recommendations for the employees in the work space.
2. Results of physical, biological and chemical hazard assessment, such as noise dosimetry and airborne chemical sampling under the annual workplace monitoring plan.
3. Assessment of the presenting complaint(s) of the affected employees who have been evaluated in the cognizant OH clinic.
4. Reports of the periodic safety departmental inspections of the workplace, and injury/illness data for the work center's employees, particularly when clusters of similar illnesses/injuries or adverse trends in their number or severity has occurred in the worksite. The command occupational safety and health officer, per OPNAVINST 5100.23 series, is responsible for maintaining trend analysis reports.

Worksite Inspection

The inspection itself should be coordinated with the cognizant work center supervisor. While the scope of the evaluation is certainly dictated in part by the specific reason for the visit,

some general principles apply for most worksite evaluations by OH personnel.

1. An essential element of the evaluation is the assessment of work practices, identification of physical, biological and/or chemical hazards, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). It is particularly helpful to have a summary of the recommended PPE from the most recent IH survey available at the time of the visit to ascertain whether the recommended protection is in use.

2. If a particular employee complaint is being investigated, the specific circumstances surrounding that complaint should be thoroughly evaluated.

3. Sufficient time for the site visit should be allotted for "oh by the way" which inevitably arise whenever the physician or nurse make a visit. If feasible, visits should be made without command representatives, thereby fostering a freer exchange between shop personnel and OH professionals.

Documentation of the Worksite Visit

Sufficiently thorough documentation of the visit is important. The following subject areas are from the format utilized at the National Naval Medical Center for site visit documentation, although many other formats could be utilized:

1. Operation/Worksite:
2. Point of Contact:
3. Findings/Discussion:
4. Recommendations:
5. Action:

Follow-up of the Worksite Visit

The specific nature of the appropriate follow-up for a worksite visit is, of course, dependent on the scope and reason for the evaluation. For example, if an employee complaint is the triggering event, a written report or debriefing session should be arranged to explain the results of the worksite evaluation to that individual. If the visit was part of an injury trend analysis, any identified safety/health hazards should be reported to the cognizant work center supervisor(s), the activity occupational safety and health officer and, if applicable, the industrial hygienist, for appropriate correction.

Regardless of the reason for the visit, a follow-up (at a minimum a phone call to the particular employee and supervisor) is a must. This protocol demonstrates command concern and instills a sense of well being in the employees and reinforces the availability and interest of the OH department. As a result of the site visits, future employee problems and concerns will be brought to medical attention prior to actual injury or illness. The information obtained can be utilized to alert appropriate OSH

personnel of potential areas of concern, in a manner which help protect employees from real or perceived risk of management reprisal for directly reporting workplace hazards to management.