



SAFETY SPOTLIGHT



ACCASBO, BCIP & GCCSD JOINT INSURANCE FUNDS

Topic: OSHA-mandated safety training

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Overview

Most OSHA regulations require training for employees that are exposed to certain workplace hazards. Many employers like the convenience of using DVDs and computer-based training to meet the requirements of these regulations. However, the use of these training methods alone does not meet the requirements or intent of most OSHA regulations.

OSHA has issued several formal interpretations over the years regarding video and computer learning stating: *“Interactive computer-based training can serve as a valuable training tool in the context of an overall training program. However, use of computer-based training by itself would not be sufficient to meet the intent of most of OSHA’s training requirements. Our position on this matter is essentially the same as our policy on the use of training videos, since the two approaches have similar shortcomings.”*

Compliance

What this means to you is that mandatory OSHA training must be conducted “live”, at least in part. You can use computer-based training for non-mandatory training or “refresher” training that is **NOT** mandated by OSHA. Many OSHA regulations have mandatory initial training, but no required refresher training. In this case, you could use a video or computer-based training to provide a refresher to your staff when you want. You can also use these training methods as part of your overall training, just not as the sole source.

As an example, you can have employees watch a generic video or computer module that covers the basic regulatory and safety information, then follow that up with a “live” training with a technically-qualified instructor that covers site-specific information that cannot be learned in the video. As long as both elements are documented, this would usually be acceptable to an OSHA Compliance Officer.

Who Can Train

OSHA rarely states who can provide training under the various regulations. Most regulations are “performance-based”, meaning you can provide the required information in several formats, as long as OSHA considers the training methods to be sufficient to meet the intent of the standard. This may include a combination of videos, handouts, demonstrations, hands-on practice, verbal instruction and testing. The reason “live” classroom training is so popular is that it is rarely deemed insufficient assuming the person conducting the training has the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively communicate the information.

In many regulations, OSHA uses terms such as “technically-qualified person” or “competent person”. This is to allow the employer flexibility to determine who can adequately provide the necessary training. It is incumbent on the employer to ensure that the trainer has the ability to instruct properly.

Here is the OSHA definition of a “Qualified Person”: *“Qualified” means one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training and experience, has successfully demonstrated his ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work, or the project.*

What This Means

There are many ways to meet the intent of a “Qualified Person”. A degree in a closely related subject would be an obvious qualification. Taking a “Train the Trainer” class in a subject would likely qualify them to teach that subject matter. Extensive documentable experience in a particular exposure would be a probable qualification. As an example, operating forklifts for 20 years in a warehouse would probably be acceptable to OSHA if that person were charged with training new forklift operators.

A school nurse is considered technically qualified to provide bloodborne pathogens training. An experienced science teacher might be qualified to conduct Laboratory Safety Training. A person attending a Hazard Communication Train the Trainer class would be qualified to conduct Hazard Communication/Right to Know training. Each situation must be evaluated on a case by case basis to ensure the person has a solid background in the subject and has the support materials to round out the training, such as handouts, quizzes, Power Points, etc. The person should also be willing to do the training. A person not invested in the class will probably not be very effective.

Common Regulations

OSHA regulations are extensive and not everyone will have the same exposures. Further, OSHA has the ability to issue citations and require training in “gray” areas of the regulations when they deem a hazard to exist. So, there need not be an actual written standard for a Compliance Officer to issue a violation alleging lack of training. Always better to train when employees are exposed to hazardous duties.

However, there are some common regulations that have obvious training requirements. Many of those applicable to schools include:

- Aerial Lift Safety (initial)
- Asbestos Awareness (annual)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (annual)
- Confined Space Entry (initial)
- CPR/AED certification (biennial)
- Fire Extinguisher Safety (annual)
- Forklift Safety (3 years)
- Hazard Communication/Right to Know (biennial)
- Laboratory Safety (initial)
- Ladder Safety (initial)
- Lock-Out/Tag-Out Safety (initial)
- Personal Protective Equipment Safety (initial)
- Respiratory Protection Training (initial-annual fit test)

Summary

You should review your current safety training programs to ensure they meet the intent of the regulations. For training conducted in-house, evaluate all training elements to verify critical information is covered, and documentation is maintained (Attendance sheet, handouts, quizzes, video titles, etc.). When the JIF provides your training, make sure the documentation package is filed appropriately and readily available during an inspection. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the JIF Safety Director’s Office.

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