

Basics of Cal/OSHA

Cal/OSHA is the California state program responsible for protecting the health and safety of workers. Cal/OSHA makes sure that employers follow occupational safety and health regulations and keep the workplace safe.

Almost all workers in California are protected by Cal/OSHA regulations (often called “standards”). This includes public employees and immigrant workers who are not legally authorized to work in California. However, some workers are not covered:

- People who are self-employed.
- Family members of farm owners who work on the family farm.
- Federal employees working in California. These workers are covered by federal OSHA.

What Are Employer Responsibilities Under Cal/OSHA?

Employers must:

- Provide their employees with work and workplaces that are safe and healthful.
- Be aware of the hazards their employees face on the job, train every worker about the specific hazards on each job assignment, and keep records of this training.
- Correct any hazardous conditions that they know may result in serious injury to their employees. Failure to do so could result in criminal charges, monetary penalties, and even jail.
- Comply with all applicable Cal/OSHA standards, including training requirements.
- Notify the nearest Cal/OSHA office of any serious injury or fatality that occurs on the job, or any serious illness caused by the job. This must be done immediately after calling for emergency help to assist the injured worker.
- Display Cal/OSHA’s *Safety and Health Protection on the Job* poster so that workers are aware of basic rights and responsibilities. This poster is also available in Spanish.

How Does Cal/OSHA Help Employers?

The Cal/OSHA Consultation Service provides technical assistance to employers on health and safety issues. Consulting services include on-site visits (no fee), assistance in complying with Cal/OSHA standards, educational seminars, and publications.

The Consultation Service is separate from the Cal/OSHA Enforcement Unit. Consultants are not involved with enforcement activities such as inspections, citations, and fines. All communications between the employer and the Consultation Service are confidential and are not shared with enforcement staff. In exchange for this free consultation, however, employers must agree to correct in a timely manner any hazards that are identified.

Cal/OSHA publications provide information about Cal/OSHA programs, standards, and general health and safety topics. Various types of guidelines and model Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) plans also are available. You can obtain copies of Cal/OSHA publications by going to their website at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/puborder.asp.

To get help from Cal/OSHA Consultation or learn more about services available, call the toll-free assistance number, (800) 963-9424, or visit www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html. If you want to arrange an on-site visit or obtain technical information, you can contact the Cal/OSHA Consultation office nearest your workplace at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation_offices.html or you can e-mail the Consultation Unit at InfoCons@dir.ca.gov.

What Are Cal/OSHA Standards?

Standards (technically called “regulations”) describe what employers must do to protect workers from various workplace hazards. Some standards are general and apply to nearly all workplaces, such as the Injury and Illness Prevention Program standard and the Hazard Communication standard. Other standards are about specific hazards found only in some workplaces, such as the Lead, Asbestos, and Fall Protection standards. Specific standards set out detailed rules that must be followed or minimum levels of protection that must be achieved for a particular hazard.

Cal/OSHA’s specific standards cover a wide variety of workplace safety issues, including:

- Toxic substances
- Harmful physical agents
- Specific operations
- Hazardous equipment
- Electrical hazards
- Tripping and falling hazards
- Hazardous waste
- Infectious diseases
- Fire and explosion hazards
- Machine hazards
- Ergonomics
- Use of respirators

Finding Cal/OSHA Standards

Cal/OSHA standards are found in Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations. The important standards cover:

- Construction industry (Subchapter 4, sections 1500–1938).
- General industry (Subchapter 7, sections 3200–6184).

You can find out about standards that may apply to your workplace by visiting the Cal/OSHA website at www.dir.ca.gov. You can also contact the Worker Occupational Safety and Health (WOSH) Specialist Resource Centers at UC Berkeley (www.lohp.org) and UCLA (www.losh.ucla.edu) for help in finding out about Cal/OSHA standards.

Standards on the Cal/OSHA Website

1. Go to www.dir.ca.gov.
2. Click on the link at the left that says “Regulations.”
3. Then click on “Cal/OSHA.”
4. Scroll down until you see the “Table of Contents.”
5. Look for the topic you are interested in by finding the relevant **chapter**, then double-clicking on the appropriate **subchapter**, and/or appropriate **article** or **group**.
6. At the top of the “Table of Contents” page, you may also use the “query” box to search for a specific hazard or topic. You can also type a standard number if you already know it. The full text of all Cal/OSHA standards is online.