

## 25.4: Cases and Problems

### Chapter Summary

- Every year, 4,340 fatalities and 3.3 million injuries occur in the workplace in the United States.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Act* was passed in 1970, with the goal of providing a safe and healthy work environment for all US workers.
- The *Occupational Safety and Health Administration* is part of the US Department of Labor and was created as a result of the act in 1970.
- OSHA applies to some specific industries such as construction, shipyards, and marine terminals. However, some of the regulations of OSHA apply to all industries.
- Some states may also have safety requirements, which may be more stringent than federal Laws.
- Right-to-know laws refer to a *material data safety sheet*, which discusses the types of chemicals, proper handling and storage, and first aid in case of an accident. These data sheets should be made available to the general public and employees.
- Right-to-know laws also require specific reporting to local and state agencies on chemicals used in certain quantities for some industries.
- OSHA requires recording keeping for all workplace accidents or illness. The record keeping is usually the responsibility of HR; OSHA Form 300 is used for reporting purposes.
- OSHA can inspect any site without prior notification. Usually, it will gather information, visit the site, and ask for a representative. The representative is normally the HR person. The site visit will be performed, followed by discussion with the company representative. Within six months of the visit a report and any penalties will be communicated.
- Stress is a major concern for organizations, since it can decrease productivity in the workplace. There are several types of stress.
- *Eustress* is a positive type of stress that can cause people to work harder toward a goal. *Distress*, on the other hand, is a type of negative stress.
- *Acute stress* occurs in short bursts, such as when finishing a project, while *chronic stress* tends to persist for long periods of time.
- *Hyperstress* is stress that is unrelieved for long periods of time and can often result in employee burnout. *Hypostress* is the lack of eustress in one's life, which can be as damaging as other types of stress, since stress is sometimes what pushes people harder.
- HR professionals can encourage employees to take vacation time, offer flextime, and encourage employees to take weekends off to help reduce stress.
- *Cumulative trauma disorder (CTD)* affects the hands, fingers, arms, or shoulders as a result of continuous repetitive motions. *Carpel tunnel syndrome (CTS)* is a type of CTD that affects the hand and wrist. People with these disorders often work in a factory or at a desk where they are doing repetitive motions constantly, such as typing or cashiering.
- OSHA has voluntary guidelines for reducing CTD in the workplace. HR can assist by ensuring employees are provided with proper equipment and training.
- *Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)* or *environmental illness (EI)* is extreme sensitivity to chemicals found in products such as hairsprays or lotions. Some individuals are extremely sensitive to other types of chemicals, such as those used in the manufacturing of carpets.
- MCS can be considered a disability if it limits one or more of life activities. In this case, reasonable accommodations must be made, such as implementing fragrance-free zones as part of a workplace dress code.
- OSHA has specific guidelines on how to handle chemicals, but other chemicals, such as those from secondhand smoke, are an important consideration in workplace safety. Twenty-six states, for example, have implemented no-smoking policies to help protect the health of workers.
- *Workplace violence* affects 2 million Americans every year. A number of groups, such as those that deliver goods, people, or services, are at greatest risk. However, workplace violence can occur internally, which is why we must be aware of the warning signs.
- *Workplace bullying* is when a person is aggressive and unreasonable in his or her behavior toward another individual. *Cyberbullying* is similar, except technology is used to humiliate and intimidate the employee.
- Keeping employee information private is the job of HR and IT. In addition, some organizations may engage in web or e-mail monitoring to ensure employees are on task. Specific policies should be developed and communicated to let employees know how they may be monitored.

- Some organizations have *employee assistance programs (EAPs)* that can provide assistance, counseling, and the like in case of personal problems or drug or alcohol abuse.
- To maintain a healthful working environment, know OSHA policies and make sure people are trained on the policies. Also ensure that specific policies on all areas of health and safety are communicated and employees are trained in those areas where necessary.

## Chapter Case

### Bullying Ming

- You just ended a meeting with Ming (one of your six employees), who gave you some disturbing information. She feels she is being bullied by one of her coworkers and is seeking your advice on how to handle it. Ming said that Mindy has been saying “good morning” to everyone as she walks by their office but doesn’t say it to Ming. Ming also said that Mindy organized a farewell lunch for one of your departing employees last week and didn’t invite Ming. She also told you of nasty things that Mindy tells other colleagues about her. For example, last month when Ming ran into Mindy at the grocery store, Mindy told everyone the next day the medications that Ming had in her cart, which included medication for irritable bowel syndrome. Ming also showed you an e-mail that Mindy had sent blaming Ming for the loss of one of Mindy’s clients. Mindy had copied the entire department on the e-mail. Ming thinks that other employees have been reluctant to involve her in projects as a result of this e-mail. Ming left your office quite upset, and you think you may need to take some action.
  1. Do you think Ming is correct in saying Mindy is bullying her? What are the indications of bullying?
  2. What advice would you give to Ming?
  3. How would you handle this situation with Mindy, without embarrassing Ming?

### Team Activity

1. Calculate the yearly incidence rates for Organic Foods Company:
  1. 2010: 10 injuries with 300,000 hours worked
  2. 2011: 5 injuries with 325,000 hours worked
  3. 2012: 20 injuries with 305,000 hours worked
2. What are some of the possible causes for the increase in incidence rates?

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