

8.9: Employee Health and Safety Laws

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the details of employee health and safety laws

The previous topics discussed cover a multitude of concerns when managing a retail store but what about health and safety? This is an important topic of concern when managing a retail store because any retail manager will be required to ensure that a safe work environment is provided for their employees to work in. One of the reasons health and safety is so important for retail managers is that current and future employees alike would not want to work in or for your retail store if a company is known for unsafe work conditions. As with the previous topics of equal employment opportunities for all and expected ethical behavior, there are laws as set forth by the federal government to which a retail manager must follow.



The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) of 1970 was passed by United States Congress in order to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of employees as well as workplace safety. “The goal was to make sure employers provide their workers a place of employment free from recognized hazards to safety and health, such as exposure to toxic chemicals, excessive noise levels, mechanical dangers, heat or cold stress, or unsanitary conditions.”^[1] Retail managers should be familiar with this law so that they can ensure their stores do not have hazardous conditions which might cause injury or serious health risks to their employees. It is no secret that modern-day employees have concerns about safe work environments. This is evidenced by the fact that jobs which might be considered more dangerous have a harder time finding potential employees to fill their positions.

The adoption of the OSH Act in 1970 gave rise to three agencies which work to verify that the standards of the act are achieved by retail companies and their management teams. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OSHRC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) are the regulatory agencies to which retailers must meet these standards.^[2] Impromptu inspections that may come as a surprise to the retail manager are one of the methods these agencies utilize when enforcing the standards as set forth in the OSH Act. If a retail store is in violation the agency has the right to impose fines against the company (or in some cases even file criminal charges) which can be costly for the organization as a whole and could also cause potential problems for the manager’s career with the company and background overall.

A retail manager, especially working in a large retail chain, might expect multiple inspections from OSHA without warning at any given time. When this happens the routine might become familiar to the retail manager but if the manager is unaware or newly promoted they would expect OSHA to present their credentials, request to see any pertinent paperwork with regard to the company and its health and safety procedures, and then inspect the premises. If it becomes apparent to the OSHA compliance inspector that there are violations present, citations may be issued depending on the severity of the offense and if there are repeat offenses jail time could be imposed.

Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/9229>

1. <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-occupational-safety-and-health-act> ↵
2. <https://www.oshrc.gov/FAQ/> ↵

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