

Cal/OSHA Inspector Vacancies Continue to Grow; Field Positions Are Eliminated

March 11, 2020

Dear Colleagues: The February 2020 Organization Charts for Cal/OSHA show that the number of vacancies in enforcement field inspectors (CSHO – compliance safety and health officer) continues to grow, at the same time that inspector positions are being eliminated.

The Org Charts (see attached and the summary of CSHO staffing) indicate:

- The number of compliance field inspectors has fallen from 198 in January to 192 in February 2020. The nominal total is 192 CSHOs, but if you factor in the District Office Senior Safety Engineers who spend 50% of their time on administrative matters assisting the District Managers, then the “field-available” CSHOs total only 186.5 inspectors.
- DOSH’s vacancy rate for field inspectors is now 21.3% -- over 20% or one-in-five positions.
- Some enforcement units are particularly hard hit – Fremont has a vacancy rate for CSHOs of 64%; San Francisco’s rate is 43% while Santa Ana’s rate is 42%, and Oakland has a vacancy rate of 33%. Overall, Region I (Bay Area) has a CSHO vacancy rate of 41%.
- Between July 2019 and February 2020, seven CSHO positions were eliminated from the Org Charts. No explanation has been given for the lost positions at the same time as increasing vacancies.
- The inspector to worker ratio – which is the international standard used to compare OHS regulatory agencies – has grown to over 1 inspector to 104,000 workers. This compares to 1 to 25,000 in Washington State and 1 to 22,000 in Oregon. The ILO benchmark is 1 inspector to 10,000 workers.
- There continues to be huge leadership vacuum throughout the Division, which has a significant impact on DOSH’s ability to protect workers in California. Two of six Regional Manager positions are vacant; five District Manager positions are vacant; two of three Mining & Tunneling manager positions are vacant; and five of 16 Senior Safety Engineer positions in District Offices are vacant. All these vacancies have to be filled with “acting” managers/supervisors drawn from the ranks below – which means that the Division has gaping holes throughout (think Swiss cheese) and an inability to meet its mandate or mission.
- Cal/OSHA continues to have only a handful of state certified bilingual inspectors – only 28 (26 in Spanish and one each in Cantonese and Vietnamese) for an estimated 5 million workers who speak languages other than English, with many monolingual in their native tongue.

With the budget surplus in California and the Coronavirus, one might think that protecting the 19+ million workers in the state would be more of a priority. All of the vacant positions are fully

funded, so the immediate task is to end the logjam in hiring and promotional exams at Cal/OSHA. This could be done by the Governor's Office with clear directives to California Department of Human Resources and the Labor Agency.

Without a jolt from above, I fear that the bleeding at Cal/OSHA will continue for months to come since retirements continue and hiring/promotions are glacial.

Best to all,
Garrett Brown