

## **Inside Cal/OSHA – First Person Narrative**

### **“Do More with Less” – Right!**

By anonymous Cal/OSHA employees, August 2014

When managers cut resources and staffing and then demand the remaining workers “do more with less,” employees tend to react. Such is the case with the attached three PDF files – the July 2<sup>nd</sup> “productivity memo” of Acting Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum and two graphics developed by rank-and-file employees of Cal/OSHA in response.

The background for this black humor is an agency that has been deliberately under-resourced and under-staffed by appointees of California Governor Jerry Brown at the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR). Rather than substantially increasing the level of enforcement staffing (even previous levels were well below the national and regional levels of staffing as registered by the standard inspector to worker ratio), DIR has demanded that the agency’s ranks “do more with less.” DIR places the blame on the Cal/OSHA workforce for the declining numbers of inspections and citations.

The text of the July 2<sup>nd</sup> memo, like most of these “do more with less” exhortations, demands Cal/OSHA inspectors produce results that are contradictory and at cross-purposes.

For example, field compliance officers are asked to increase the number of inspections and close them faster (items #2 and 6), while at the same time being asked to identify more hazards, conduct “complete and thorough” inspections and “collect higher quality evidence” (items #3, 4, and 5) – all of which require more time to do and make it unlikely that the inspections will be closed faster and more inspectors will be done.

The lack of resources has just been confirmed by Federal OSHA in its latest FAME – “Federal Annual Monitoring and Evaluation” report issued in mid-August 2014. The report covers the period of October 2012 to September 2013, the last complete federal fiscal year.

On page 33 of the FAME report, Fed OSHA notes that the number of Cal/OSHA compliance officers in August 2013 decreased from the previous federal fiscal year and the year before that.

“There has been a steady decrease from FY 2011 for a total loss of 25 compliance officer FTEs (full time equivalent positions). Although steps are being taken to fill positions, a significant number of vacancies remain for field compliance staff,” Fed OSHA noted.

In fact, the July 2014 Cal/OSHA Organization chart (generated internally) indicated there were 175 field compliance officers in Cal/OSHA’s six enforcement regions, with 18 identified vacancies. In January 2011, Democrat Jerry Brown inherited 195 field compliance officers from Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger when Brown became

Governor. In November 2013, the California Fish & Game Department had 253 Game Wardens in the field.

Stung by the growing publicity about Cal/OSHA understaffing, the Governor and DIR have increased funding in the current state fiscal year (July 2014 to June 2015) for a handful of additional field compliance officers.

As required by the California legislature following the Chevron oil refinery fire in Richmond in August 2012, Cal/OSHA will get 12 new compliance officers for the “Process Safety Management” unit which conducts inspections only at the state’s 15 oil refineries and certain other chemical plants.

There will be funding for 12 or 13 new compliance officers for the main enforcement district offices during this fiscal year. But this means that only half of the 21 enforcement district offices around the state will receive one new inspector, while the other half of the District Offices will get zero new staff. In the meantime, the wave of retirements by “baby boomer” inspectors continues to grow and it is not clear whether DIR will backfill these vacant positions.

Not to worry, say the bureaucrats, we will “do more with less.” The response of some of the ranks can be seen in the accompanying graphics...