

## **Terribly Weakened Cal/OSHA Facing COVID Infections and “Restart” Hazards**

April 30, 2020

You may be interested in watching Cal/OSHA Chief Doug Parker’s 2-minute Facebook message yesterday covering basic infection control measures, employer responsibilities and workers’ rights at: <https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaDIR/>

Preparations are continuing for the launch of a limited resumption of field enforcement inspections, involving about a third of the 188 available compliance inspectors, in May. The backlog of worker complaints, accident and fatality reports is well over 1,000 at this point.

The Division has to address this situation from a terribly weakened position – large number of inspector vacancies and critical gaps in enforcement management – in the midst of the pandemic and 15 months after Gov Newsom took office.

The April DOSH Organization Charts show:

- Cal/OSHA has 52 vacant compliance safety and health officer (CSHO) positions, for a vacancy rate for CSHO positions of 21% (52 vacancies in 246 positions). The total number of positions in April 2020 is 246 (filled and vacant) – three less than November 2019 and five less than July 2019;
- Some enforcement District Offices are particularly hard hit: Fremont has 7 of 11 CSHO positions vacant (64%); San Francisco has 3 of 7 positions vacant (43%); Santa Ana has 5 of 12 positions vacant (42%) and no District Manager; and Oakland has 33% vacancies.
- Overall, Region I (San Francisco Bay Area) has a CSHO vacancy rate of 38%. Region III (San Diego/Santa Ana/San Bernardino) has 3 of 4 District Manager positions vacant and the Regional Manager position is also vacant.
- There are six District Offices without a District Manager: San Bernardino, Sacramento, Long Beach, LETF/Santa Ana, Santa Ana and Van Nuys. In these District Offices, a CSHO must serve as Acting District Manager, so those offices effectively have one additional CSHO vacancy as the ADMs do not conduct field inspections.
- No progress in increasing the number of CSHOs fluent in languages other than English.

The large number of vacant District Manager and Regional Manager positions will have a significant impact on Cal/OSHA’s ability to meet the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, the “restart” of the economy, and the incredible backlog of work. Morale in the Division is understandably low, and that makes it even more difficult to resume enforcement inspections in the field.

It is a very tough situation and one that contrasts with progress in the public health realm here in California. Occupational health – that is the health and safety of workers on the job now and those who will be returning – should not be a “sacrifice zone” where “disposable” people are left to the mercy of their employers.

I wish the news was better.

Garrett Brown