

DOSH Inspector Staffing Data

Garrett Brown, August 14, 2025

- **Cal/OSHA's latest available staffing data (as of May 1st) shows 39% vacancies for field enforcement inspectors**
- **State Auditor report documents crippling impact of continuing inspector vacancies on worker protections in California**
- **Newsom's \$16 million cut to Cal/OSHA enforcement – not necessary for financial reasons – mimics Trump's cuts to Fed OSHA and weakens protections for the state's 19 million workers**

The latest Cal/OSHA staffing data released by the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) is the April 30th Cal/OSHA Organization Chart, which lists every authorized and fully funded position, the name of the person in the position or whether it is vacant. DIR routinely withholds release of staffing information for three to four months after it is generated by Cal/OSHA.

Continued high rates of CSHO vacancies on May 1, 2025

The latest data indicates the rate of CSHO vacancies in enforcement units is 39% (110 vacancies in 281 fully funded and authorized CSHO positions).

The adverse impact of this years-long understaffing is seen most clearly at the level of District Offices where enforcement activities occur:

- 12 District Offices (Enforcement) have CSHO vacancy rates higher than 40% -- nine District Offices have vacancy rates above 50% with a high of 86%;
- Four Regions have region-wide CSHO vacancy rates above 40% -- Region 1 (SF), Region 3 (San Diego), Region 4 (LA) and Region 8 (Central Valley);
- Three District Offices have no District Manager – Fresno High Hazard; Santa Ana PSM/Non-Refinery; and Santa Barbara – adversely impacting effectiveness;
- Five District Offices have zero administrative staff – American Canyon; Fresno High Hazard; Fresno LETF; Santa Ana; and Santa Barbara – adversely impacting functioning.

In the Los Angeles area – which is dealing with the clean-up and rebuilding from the January 2025 wild fires, Cal/OSHA District Offices have significant CSHO vacancies which undermine their ability to respond to worker complaints and accident reports: Van Nuys (58% CSHO vacancies), Monrovia (56%), Santa Ana (45%), and Long Beach (40%).

DOSH website information inaccurate and unreliable

DIR publishes a page on the Cal/OSHA website on hiring and recruitment which consistently provides inaccurate and unreliable data.

The Cal/OSHA web page claimed that staffing on April 30, 2025 – the same date as the just released Organization Chart – indicated Cal/OSHA “Enforcement” had a vacancy rate of 16%. However, a position-by-position hand count of CSHO vacancies in enforcement offices on the April 30th Organization Chart document a vacancy rate of 39%.

In January 2025, the Cal/OSHA web page claimed that “Enforcement” vacancies were 31% when the position-by-position hand count documents a 44% vacancy rate.

DIR’s “cooking the books” of Cal/OSHA understaffing is done by including managers and administrative staff – not just the critical field enforcement inspectors – in the “Enforcement” category, but also excluding the enforcement Process Safety Management (PSM) unit which has had CSHO vacancies of higher than 50%.

By enlarging the pool of non-CSHO positions – and excluding enforcement units with high rates of CSHO vacancies – DIR provides inaccurate data that hides ongoing CSHO vacancies.

State Audit results show the crippling impact of the continuing understaffing

The California State Auditor issued a highly critical report on Cal/OSHA performance on July 17, 2025. The audit showed how numerous worker complaints and incidents that resulted in serious worker injuries simply were not investigated by Cal/OSHA’s enforcement offices. In inspections that were conducted, the Auditor found that many enforcement actions were incomplete, failed to follow standard protocols, and resulted in penalties to employers violating state laws that were lower than established by the agency’s own policies and procedures.

Given the now years-long understaffing of Cal/OSHA field inspectors, it is not surprising that the State Auditor found that Cal/OSHA is not capable of meeting either its legal mandate nor its mission of protecting California’s 19 million workers.

Chronic CSHO vacancies have generated tremendous pressure on District Managers and CSHOs themselves to “open and close, open and close, open and close” as many perfunctory inspections as possible to keep up with the steady flow incoming worker complaints and employer accident reports.

One way District Managers can cope with CSHO vacancies is to “invalidate” legitimate worker complaints that should be investigated, and to categorize worker injuries as not

requiring on-site inspection despite clear state law. As a result, the number of “letter investigations” – that do not involve an on-site inspection and allow District Managers to close worker complaints after employers claim they are in compliance with state law – has increased over the past several years.

In June 2025, Cal/OSHA reported its performance statistics for the last full calendar year (2024) compared to the previous year. Cal/OSHA opened 7% fewer inspections in 2024 compared to 2023, and issued 19% fewer citations in 2024. Employer fines dropped dramatically with the fewer inspections and citations. In 2024, only 41% of worker complaints and employer accident reports were investigated by an on-site inspection – 59% were “letter investigations” that involved no on-site activity.

Cal/OSHA performance undermined by CSHO vacancies

The latest staffing data indicates that only two of the 171 filled CSHO positions were held by industrial hygienists. Industrial hygienists have specialized training in conducting “health” inspections – such as heat, wildfire smoke, airborne chemical, lead and silica exposures, noise, and ergonomics. The lack of qualified personnel for these types of inspections means Cal/OSHA cannot provide effective and complete worker protection.

The latest staffing data showed that only 20 out of 171 CSHOs are fluent in languages other than English, which greatly limits the effectiveness of health and safety enforcement in a state where more than 5 million workers primarily or only speak other languages. For example, the Agricultural Safety unit enforcement staff includes three bilingual inspectors among its six-member staff, while Regions 2 and 8 in the Central Valley have only one bilingual inspector each.

Newsom follows Trump’s lead in cutting enforcement funding

On July 1st, the current 2025-26 fiscal year began. Governor Newsom’s budget, approved by the Democratic majority Legislature, cut \$16 million in funds for Cal/OSHA compliance. This is a 10.3% reduction from FY 2024-25. All of the adverse impacts of chronic understaffing will be difficult to overcome with this Trump-like reduction in worker protection.

Cal/OSHA’s funds do NOT come from the state revenues, but rather primarily from the independent, self-financing “OSH Fund” which assesses a very small surcharge on employer worker compensation insurance premiums. The OSH Fund has run surpluses of \$200 million over the last several fiscal years. There is no financial reason to cut Cal/OSHA’s resources for enforcement.

California's worker H&S protections dramatically lower than neighboring states

The standard measure of worker health and safety protection agencies internationally is the ratio of inspectors to workers. The International Labor Organization (ILO) recommends a ratio of 1 inspector to 15,000 workers for advanced industrial countries.

The state of Washington has a ratio of 1 inspector to 28,000 workers, while the state of Oregon has a ratio of 1 inspector to 23,000 workers. The state of California has a ratio of 1 inspector to 106,000 workers. This state data comes from the April 2025 "Death on the Job" report issued by the AFL-CIO. The hand count of Cal/OSHA positions on the latest Organization Chart documents a ratio in California of 1 inspector to 112,000 workers.

With the chronic CSHO vacancies, and now the \$16 million cut for Cal/OSHA enforcement, California's 19 million workers will have even less protections than previously.

But why don't the workers of California deserve the same level of protection that workers in Washington state and Oregon get from their state governments?