

## **Cal/OSHA inspector vacancies remain above 40% while details on Newsom's proposed cuts to worker safety are pending**

**Garrett Brown – May 14, 2025**

The latest available data for Cal/OSHA field enforcement staffing indicates an inspector vacancy rate of 44% -- or 122 vacant enforcement officer positions. Sixteen enforcement offices have vacancy rates above 40% and 11 offices are missing more than half (>50%) of the fully funded and authorized inspectors. Worker health and safety protection across the state are crippled.

At the same time, worker safety advocates are waiting for the details from Governor Newsom's "May Revise" of the proposed state budget for the next fiscal year which begins in July 2025.

In January 2025, Governor Newsom proposed cutting Cal/OSHA's enforcement budget by \$21 million dollars (\$21,028,000) for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2025. Cal/OSHA is not funded by the state's General Fund but rather from an annual grant from Fed OSHA, an assessment on employers' workers compensation insurance premiums for the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Fund, and a fee-for-service for equipment inspections on elevators, amusement rides, etc. All these funds are independent of the state General Fund.

This proposed funding cut comes at a time when the OSH Fund – the main source of Cal/OSHA's independent funding – has run a \$200 million surplus ("reserves for economic uncertainties") in the last two fiscal years. Resources are immediately available to replace any cut in Federal OSHA funding to Cal/OSHA, as well as to maintain the agency's state funding.

The Governor's proposed \$21 million cut to Cal/OSHA enforcement is not necessitated by projected deficits in the state budget, but is a deliberate decision to reduce worker protections in California that are fully funded by an independent sources of revenue.

Cal/OSHA had 122 vacancies in positions for compliance safety and health officers (CSHO) in January 2025, for a vacancy rate of 44%. The data, released by the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) in May 2025, is from the December 31, 2024, "Organization Chart" for Cal/OSHA. DIR withholds release of Cal/OSHA staffing data for months after it has been generated. Cal/OSHA had 161 filled field inspector (full time equivalent) positions as of January 1, 2025.

The latest data shows how unreliable the information on hiring posted on Cal/OSHA's website is. The website claimed the December 31, 2024, data indicated Cal/OSHA's

Enforcement vacancy rate was 31% when a hand-count of the same Organization Chart showed 44% vacancies for field enforcement inspectors. The website's "Enforcement" category (see attached pdf file) includes managers and clerical staff as well as inspectors – but excludes the enforcement Process Safety Management Unit, which had a 56% inspector vacancy rate in December 2024. The website's hiring information mixes up job classifications and gives an inaccurate picture of the key enforcement staffing positions.

Meanwhile six of the eight enforcement Regions in Cal/OSHA have inspector vacancies above 40%. Sixteen enforcement District Offices have CSHO vacancy rates at or above 40% -- with 11 offices having vacancy rates of 50% or more. These offices are: PSM/Refinery Unit (70%); San Francisco (67%); Santa Barbara (67%); Fresno (64%); Fremont (60%); San Bernardino (57%); Riverside (57%); Bakersfield (57%); American Canyon (55%); Monrovia (53%); Oakland (50%); PSM/Non-Refinery Unit (47%); San Diego (46%); Van Nuys (45%); Santa Ana (45%); and Long Beach (40%).

In addition, seven District Offices have no District Manager (Los Angeles, Long Beach, Van Nuys, Modesto, Santa Barbara, Fresno High Hazard Unit, and Santa Ana PSM Non-Refinery Unit). Four District Offices have zero clerical staff (American Canyon, Santa Ana, Santa Barbara, and Fresno HHU). In these offices, field compliance inspectors are required to perform the managerial and clerical duties of the vacant positions.

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) reported the California civilian labor force in January 2025 as 19,704,100 workers. The 161 FTE CSHO positions represents an inspector to worker ratio of 1 inspector to 122,386 workers. **Cal/OSHA's inspector to worker ratio of 1 inspector to 122,000 workers is much less health protective than Washington State's ratio of 1 to 28,000, and Oregon's ratio of 1 to 23,000.** [These non-California ratios were cited in the April 2025 "Death on the Job" report.]

The DOSH Org Chart indicates that nine field CSHOs are "bilingual." Region II (Northern California and Central Valley) and Region VIII (Central Valley and Central Coast) – regions with numerous farmworkers – both have one bilingual CSHOs in the field. It is estimated that at least 5 million of the state's 19 million worker labor force speak languages other than English, with many monolingual in their native tongue. The new Agricultural Safety unit has six CSHOs for the four slated enforcement offices in Bakersfield, El Centro, Lodi, and Salinas.

In addition, there are only three industrial hygiene inspectors among the 161 field compliance officers. Which means that industrial hygiene inspections for "health" issues such as exposures to heat, silica, lead, chemicals, and repetitive motions/ergonomics are severely limited.

California's 19 million workers pay the price for the years-long understaffing crisis which threatens their health, safety, and very lives.