

Cal/OSHA starts the current fiscal year on July 1st with:

- **101 vacant field inspector positions for a rate of 36%**
- **\$16 million budget cut specifically for Enforcement**
- **66 vacant positions eliminated, “mostly clerical”**

Garrett Brown – September 7, 2025

The latest publicly available data on Cal/OSHA compliance officer staffing – the June 30th DOSH Organization Chart – reveals that there were 101 field inspector positions vacant (for a vacancy rate of 36%) while 66 (“mostly clerical”) vacant positions were eliminated, and \$16 million was cut from Cal/OSHA enforcement operations.

Despite a highly critical July report from the California State Auditor, and a legislative oversight hearing of Cal/OSHA in August, the crippling effects of years-long understaffing are now combined with a fiscally unnecessary budget cut and elimination of DOSH positions.

The June 30th staffing data shows significant inspector vacancies continue

On July 1st, there were 101 vacancies for compliance safety and health officers (CSHOs) in enforcement offices across the state. Twelve District Offices had CSHO vacancies higher than 40% and eight offices had CSHO vacancies at or above 50% -- Riverside (86%), Santa Barbara (67%), Fremont (60%), Van Nuys (58%), San Bernardino (57%), Monrovia (56%), PSM – Non-Refinery unit (50%), San Francisco (50%), Santa Ana (45%), Bakersfield (43%), Long Beach and Mining & Tunneling (both at 40%).

The Los Angeles area District Offices – responsible for protecting workers involved in the clean-up and rebuilding after the January wild fires – had significant CSHO vacancies on July 1st: Van Nuys (58%), Monrovia (56%), Santa Ana (45%) and Long Beach (40%).

There were three District Offices without managers and four offices with zero clerical staff – which means CSHOs in those offices have to forgo field inspections to do administrative work.

The just released DOSH Org Chart again illustrates how misleading and unreliable the hiring data is on the DOSH website. The website hiring charts claims that “Enforcement” had a vacancy rate on June 30th of 11% -- while the position-by-position hand count of the DOSH Org Chart of the same date documents a CSHO vacancy rate of 36%. The web chart includes managers and admin staff in “Enforcement,” but also excludes the enforcement PSM unit which had a CSHO vacancy rate of 42% on June 30th.

State Auditor documents Cal/OSHA failures due to understaffing

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 incoming flow of worker complaints and employer accident reports.

Hiring progress undermined by budget cut and position eliminations

Cal/OSHA has, in fact, hired field inspectors over the last several months. But this progress is undermined by the \$16 million enforcement budget cut. Governor Newsom's enforcement cut, approved by the Democratic majority Legislature, went into effect on July 1st. Likewise 66 vacant positions were eliminated in the new fiscal year.

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 more than 19 million workers will pay the cost of these actions in injuries, illnesses and fatalities if there is no effective enforcement and deterrent to irresponsible employers .

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 107,000 workers.

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