

November 13, 2019

Dramatic jump in Enforcement inspector vacancies at Cal/OSHA

As Cal/OSHA holds its first public Advisory Committee in more than a year tomorrow, I wanted to pass along the information that indicates how much work newly appointed Cal/OSHA Chief Doug Parker and California Labor Secretary Julie Su have in front of them.

In November 2019, there are a total of 46 vacant field compliance officer positions in Cal/OSHA, for a vacancy rate of 18.5%. This is the highest vacancy rate since September 2017, more than two years ago.

Region I (San Francisco Bay Area) is riddled with 18 CSHO vacancies, including 3 of 7 positions in San Francisco, 6 of 11 positions in Fremont, and 3 positions in both Oakland and American Canyon.

There are District Offices in other regions that also have 3 compliance safety and health officer (CSHO) vacancies—which hobbles the offices' ability to respond to worker complaints and injury incidents – Santa Ana, Van Nuys and the High Hazard Unit (HHU).

In addition to a lack of field inspectors, there are critical vacancies in management positions that undermine the Division's ability to protect California workers. These include:

- Two Regional Manager positions – Region III/Santa Ana and Region VI managing the HHU and the Labor Enforcement Task Force unit (LETF);
- Four District Manager positions – Sacramento, Santa Ana, San Bernardino, and the Santa Ana office of LETF;
- Two of the three District Offices of the Mining & Tunneling Unit do not have managers; and
- Five of 16 Senior Safety Engineer positions in the Enforcement District Offices are vacant.

Moreover, several District Offices with large numbers of field inspectors are without a manager – Sacramento (13 CSHOs), San Bernardino (11 CSHOs) and Santa Ana (9 CSHOs).

It is also worth noting that the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR - parent agency for Cal/OSHA) is still without a Director – 10 months after the inauguration of Governor Gavin Newsom. This raises the question of Governor Newsom's commitment to workers' rights – wage & hour and workers compensation, as well as health and safety – and Labor Secretary Julie Su's ability to fill out her leadership team.

Clearly one of the priorities for Chief Doug Parker is filling these vacancies and providing direction to a Cal/OSHA that has been drifting in limbo for months. Hiring at Cal/OSHA has been limited since the beginning of the year because of the restrictions placed on DIR and DOSH by the California Department of Human Resources. These restrictions were instituted after two reports by the State Personnel Board and the California State Auditor documented nepotism and retaliation against whistle-blowers by then DIR Director Christine Baker, who abruptly retired in 2018.

I wish the news was better....

Garrett Brown