

Labor Occupational Health Program

MONITOR

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THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND OSHA

by Brenda Presley
LOHP Labor Coordinator

The impact on OSHA of the Reagan administration-- its budget cuts and its philosophy-- has been severe. The administration's direction is exemplified by:

- a drastic reduction in OSHA enforcement, along with a new philosophy of enforcement;
- an anti-regulatory mood which has called into question both present and proposed standards; and
- a funding cut for "New Directions" educational programs supported by OSHA around the U.S.

Enforcement

Inspectors (who were cut 21%) have instructions to act only against alleged violations likely to result in physical harm to workers in the most hazardous workplaces. OSHA will inspect only if there is a so-called "imminent danger" to workers. Thus, OSHA is ending its tradition of automatic inspections in response to valid worker complaints. With only 1200 inspectors and 5 million workplaces, the response to complaints will be minimal.

Another change in the enforcement policy is a lengthening of the response time from 3 to 5 days for serious complaints and from 20 to 30 days for those that are "other than serious."

The new OSHA leadership encourages labor-management committees as a substitute for enforcement. OSHA head Thorne Auchter says, "Our regulatory policy just means that the real health and safety battle should not be labor vs. management or management vs. government; it should be labor and management and government vs. workplace hazards." Auchter has proposed that some workplaces in which there are joint labor-management committees be exempted from OSHA inspections.

What results have these new policies had? A survey done by the AFL-CIO Safety and Health Department shows the following compliance statistics since the Reagan/Auchter administration has taken over:

Total inspections-	Down 19%
Follow-up inspections-	Down 69%
"Willful" citations-	Down 71%
"Serious" citations-	Down 30%
Total penalties (\$)-	Down 44%

Standards

OSHA is now reconsidering existing or proposed standards on: noise, lead, arsenic, cancer, asbestos, labeling, respirators, and cotton dust, with a view toward meeting Reagan's campaign pledge to eliminate "unnecessary regulation" and to evaluate the cost impact on business of all regulations.

"New Directions" Programs

"New Directions" grants were reduced 64% in the 1982 budget compared to 1981. This OSHA funding, initiated by the Carter administration under former OSHA head Eula Bingham, has spurred many innovative health and safety educational efforts by university labor education programs, unions, occupational health and safety committees, trade associations, and "COSH" groups (areawide health and safety coalitions.) University programs (such as U.C. Berkeley's LOHP) and COSH groups had their funds cut by an average of 75%. Grants to unions were cut 54% but employer group programs were cut only 22%.

In spite of an overall estimated 41% staff position reduction suffered by New Directions grant recipients, most of these programs will survive. Grant recipients have become very creative. One example is PHILAPOSH, the Philadelphia "COSH" coalition. The group took advantage of a "donor option plan" instituted by the Philadelphia United Way Agency. Under the plan, contributors designate their pledges to any tax exempt local health and welfare organization, whether or not it is a member of the United Way. PHILAPOSH organized local unions to encourage their members to designate its group to receive their contributions, thereby receiving \$40,000 so far.

LOHP has also been forced to cut back, but we continue to emphasize worker education to build self-reliance by unions in an era of scarce government resources. A conference on the changes in OSHA was held in February, 1982, and a week-long intensive training program for unions will be offered in the fall. (See the accompanying article for a report on the February conference.)

Our work is cut out for us in the '80's. It is increasingly clear that we have to become more self-reliant in the area of occupational safety and health.

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LOHP Staff: Patricia Ayers, Robin Baker, Paul Chown, Eugene Darling, Larry Drapkin, Brenda Presley, Susan Salisbury.

Monitors New Format

Due to major cuts in the Labor Occupational Health Program's federal funding for 1982, our health and safety newsletter Monitor will no longer be published in its original, 16-page format.

For more information on the cuts in our own and many other health and safety programs around the U.S., as well as how LOHP and others are responding, see Brenda Presley's article on this page.

LOHP does place a high priority on maintaining a communications link with unions and unionists in California, as well as with the hundreds of former Monitor subscribers around the U.S. and overseas. For this reason, we are inaugurating this limited Monitor format as a regular monthly insert in the Institute of Industrial Relations' Labor Center Reporter. Despite the limited space, we will continue many of the features which readers found most valuable about the Monitor-- feature articles, news reports, announcements and reviews of new publications in the field, and reports on upcoming conferences and other activities.

The combined Monitor and Labor Center Reporter will be sent monthly for the next year to all Monitor subscribers as of August, 1981 (the final issue in the old format), regardless of the number of issues remaining on the subscription.

Calendar

Upcoming LOHP health and safety conferences, workshops, and training sessions:

APRIL 21, 1982 - Meeting on Indoor Air Pollution. 4-6 pm., 2515 Channing Way, Berkeley. Sponsored by LOHP for concerned members of the labor community. For information, call Robin Baker or Brenda Presley at (415) 642-5507.

JUNE 2, 1982 - Joint Labor-Management Health and Safety Committees. Sponsored by LOHP. For location and details, contact Larry Drapkin at LOHP, (415) 642-5507.

JUNE 9-10, 1982 - Workshop for Occupational Health Nurses. At Kaiser Center, Oakland. For more information, contact Leslie Ray, U.C. San Francisco Nursing School, at (415) 666-5849.

LOHP Conference Report

"Where Are We Now?" Attracts 75

More than 75 trade unionists, health and safety activists, and others attended the Labor Occupational Health Program's first conference of the new year, "Where Are We Now? Occupational Health and Safety in 1982" on February 20.

The conference addressed issues relating to policy changes in OSHA under the new administration. Enforcement, standards, and New Directions program funding have undergone major changes recently, as described in the accompanying article. Art Carter, Chief of Cal/OSHA, discussed effects of federal policy changes on the State program. Particular emphasis at the conference was placed on ways workers and unions can help themselves: how the bargaining process can be used to get more and better health and safety language; getting involved in the standards setting process; and coalition building. The conference also included information about health and safety training programs for unionists, and material on health screening programs.

"One of our objectives this year will be to develop skills among local union members and officers so that they can carry on this work independently in a period of decreased government funding," said LOHP Program Coordinator Robin Baker.

The conference was well received. Some specific recommendations which came out of it included:

- 1) That unions focus on developing their own in-house ability to deal with health and safety issues, including strong language in the contract;
- 2) That a network of labor and resource groups be established to participate in the standards-setting process;
- 3) That a coalition of unions be established to address the issue of indoor air pollution in offices and industrial settings and to look into possible standards; and
- 4) More active participation in the Cal/OSHA Appeals Board by submitting names to serve on the Board and by raising funds to allow union representatives to take time off work to participate in hearings.

- Brenda Presley

Clearinghouse

The Labor Occupational Health Program continues to offer for sale a variety of books, pamphlets, fact sheets, slide shows, motion pictures, and other educational materials on health and safety. A complete list of our materials, prices, and ordering information is available by writing to LOHP at 2521 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94720.

We will be using the Clearinghouse column each month to spotlight recent and particularly significant or timely materials which LOHP is offering.

This month, the following recent publications are worthy of note:

Getting the Facts is a 100-page paperback guide which describes how to set up an occupational safety and health library. Topics covered are planning, organization, acquisitions, and small operations. A separate and very comprehensive bibliography section lists a wide variety of publications that can help identify workplace problems, their causes and solutions.

An ordering guide is also included. Individual orders are \$4.00 and institutional orders are \$7.00. Order from the address above; enclose prepayment. Make checks payable to: "The Regents of U.C."

Workplace Health and Safety: A Guide to Collective Bargaining is a 68-page paperback. Designed to assist unions in drafting contract proposals for workplace health and safety, the book contains a checklist of health and safety issues, actual samples of union contract clauses, and model clauses for each issue. Individual orders are \$5.00 and institutional orders are \$8.50. Order from the address above; enclose prepayment. Make checks payable to "The Regents of U.C."

Finally, LOHP still has available a popular information packet, Hazards of Video Display Terminals, which reprints material from a wide range of sources and contains some original information. Copies are \$3.00 from the address above; enclose prepayment and make checks payable to "The Regents of U.C."