

Over 100 Pennsylvania Worksites Lack OSHA Supervision

Some professions carry a pronounced risk of danger. Employees who work around heavy machinery or toxic chemicals are exposed to a greater risk of injury than those who spend most of their day behind a desk. However, they are just as entitled to expect that their employer will provide them with a reasonably safe workplace.

Pennsylvania worker's compensation lawyers know the terrible consequences that can result from an unsafe workplace.

Usually, workplace safety is monitored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. However, over 100 Pennsylvania worksites – many of which are large industrial facilities – are exempt from some OSHA inspections because they participate in the Administration's Voluntary Protection Program. Thousands of other jobsites across the country are also exempt.

Worksites are allowed into the Voluntary Protection Program because they are ostensibly safer than most other workplaces. However, safety advocates are increasingly questioning the program's efficacy. They say that model workplaces may not actually be safer – rather, they allege that the worksites are just better than other at making themselves look good on paper.

Indeed, a 2009 Government Accountability Office investigation found that at least one-third of the so-called “model workplaces” in the Voluntary Protection Program were not accurately reporting rates of work-related injuries and illnesses.

'Model Workplaces' Not Punished for Safety Violations

An employer's disregard for worker safety can have catastrophic consequences. They can be even worse when OSHA allows employers to self-police. However, OSHA doesn't generally subject Voluntary Protection Program worksites with repeat safety violations to increased scrutiny.

Since 2000, more than 80 workers have been killed on-the-job at OSHA model workplaces. In nearly half of these deaths, inspectors uncovered serious safety violations. Yet, even in cases where safety violations lead to worker deaths, model workplaces face few consequences and are allowed to remain exempt from OSHA supervision.

Source: The Center for Public Integrity, "[Deaths at 'Model Workplaces' Missing From List of Federal Overseers](#)," Chris Hamby, Nov. 4, 2011.