

# Champion of COVID Response

OSHA Chicago Regional Office

Cooperative State Programs (CSP) Unit

**US Department of Labor**

**Occupational Safety and Health Administration**



## **Summary:**

During calendar year 2020, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Cooperative and State Programs (CSP) unit in Region 5 had an exceptionally productive year despite challenges faced with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The unit worked with OSHA's National Office to ensure COVID-19 information was consistent with guidance from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and was targeted toward the most vulnerable and essential employers and workers. The team worked with Regional leadership to institute the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in order to ensure continued performance of essential functions with minimal interruptions. The team also made several updates to additional emergency preparedness documents. Throughout the year, the team also continued to host outreach events. Although limited to electronic platforms, the team was able to conduct several outreach activities.

**Description:** During calendar year 2020, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Cooperative and State Programs (CSP) unit in Region V had an exceptionally productive year, despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. From the start of the pandemic, CSP

took a leadership role in ensuring that outreach and compliance assistance were distributed across the region, both internally to OSHA staff as well as externally to other government agencies and our stakeholders.

The unit worked with OSHA's National Office to ensure that COVID-19 information was consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and was targeted towards the most vulnerable and essential employers and workers, such as those in healthcare and long-term care facilities and the meat and poultry industries. Information was delivered virtually through email blasts and via live presentations on Zoom and Microsoft

Teams. CSP standardized responses to Frequently Asked Questions and provided customer assistance both via the internet and by means of live telephone calls.

At the onset of the pandemic, after the Department of Labor instituted a maximum telework posture, CSP began analyzing Region V's existing human capital to identify individuals with the skills, knowledge, and talent necessary to accomplish the goals of ensuring staff safety and enhancing the Agency's ability to reach stakeholders with accurate and reliable information related to COVID-19.

CSP began working with Regional leadership to institute the Region V Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in order to ensure the continued performance of essential functions with minimal or no interruptions that could threaten OSHA personnel, our infrastructure, our information systems or any other vital assets.

Once the COOP was initiated, CSP assisted Regional leadership by updating and creating additional emergency preparedness documents whose purpose was to assist in ensuring staff safety. These documents included the Regional Strategic Approach for Pandemic Viruses Plan, the Region V Phase I Reconstitution Plan, and cleaning and sanitation procedures for OSHA offices and Government Owned Vehicles. Additionally, CSP contributed to the development of the temporary N-95 respirator guidance document and to the use of job hazard analysis as a resource to keep staff safe while responding to COVID-19 fatalities and performing other. Additionally, CSP worked with OSHA's Strategic Partnerships to ensure COVID-19 outreach and compliance assistance resources were widely available. Furthermore, CSP worked with Alliance participants including offices of various Consulate Generals across the Region to reach and educate vulnerable and hard-to-reach workers, usually non-English speaking minority individuals, about their safety and health rights and how to protect themselves from COVID-19. Some examples of outreach activities coordinated and conducted by CSP for COVID-19 are listed below.

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- A Migrant Farmworker COVID Committee was established in Wisconsin. Video conferences were held every other week to keep all involved abreast of the changing conditions for farmworkers in Wisconsin. Members of this group are predominately Hispanic/Latino and include both dairy workers and seasonal farmworkers. Information and resources were shared with agencies and community-based organizations to support the health and well-being of this vulnerable community. A Compliance Assistance Specialist (CAS) from OSHA and the OSHA Region V Labor Liaison were able to address workplace concerns and provide the latest guidance during the pandemic.
- Three Region V CASs were assigned to the Coronavirus Task Force to assist Region V Enforcement Programs with addressing COVID-related cases. They disseminated enforcement guidelines to the Area Offices and screened casefiles prior to upper level reviews for consistency. As former Compliance Officers, they served as technical advisors for the application of standards and the interpretation of CDC guidelines. These individuals researched issues as they arose.
- The Peoria Area Office presented at the Illinois Nursing Home Administrators' Association conference in Springfield, Illinois. The Peoria CAS's presentation focused on OSHA's pandemic guidelines, respiratory protection, PPE, reporting & recording requirements, bloodborne pathogens, hazard communication, lockout, ladders, and workplace violence. He also answered questions from the participants. During the summer of 2020, a webinar was provided for the Illinois Nursing Home Administrators' Association clarifying OSHA standards and guidelines for COVID-19.
- The CASs from the Columbus and Cleveland Area Offices, in collaboration with a consultant from Ohio OSHA On-site Consultation, presented and discussed OSHA's respiratory protection requirements and additional OSHA healthcare-related standards during an Ohio Health Care Association webinar on September 14, 2020. Over 80 attendees joined the webinar.
- The CAS from the Cleveland Area Office worked with the Mexican consulates within the Region to help them include safety information and other information regarding OSHA's mission on their websites. This outreach project affected vulnerable workers, youth, and immigrant workers.
- The CAS from the Cleveland Area Office performed two joint presentations with Wage and Hour on the Family First Act and on OSHA's compliance requirements for COVID-19. These presentations reached approximately 150 employers.

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