

Safety Note #111

## SURVIVING A REGULATORY INSPECTION



Having your office or facility inspected by a regulatory agency can be stressful, but following a few tips can make the process go more smoothly. If you have a scheduled inspection and know when a regulatory agency is coming, call the EH&S office and we will help you prepare, or if necessary, come and assist you during the inspection. However, many inspections are unannounced, so the information given here can help you to be prepared.

### Before the inspection:

- ◆ Have records well organized and accessible.

### When the inspector arrives:

- ◆ Verify the inspector's credentials.
- ◆ Request an opening conference.
- ◆ Ask the inspector what prompted the inspection (such as complaint, accident, etc.) - they may not answer, but it could help you understand what they want to see.
- ◆ Ask what areas they want to visit and what records they want to see.
- ◆ In some cases you may need to notify labor unions, if the inspection involves represented staff members.

### During the inspection:

- ◆ Answer questions honestly and succinctly:
  - Do not volunteer extra information.
  - Do not speculate or share gossip.
- ◆ Be responsive to requests for information - if you can't find something, promise to follow-up, and then follow-through.
- ◆ Ask questions if you do not understand what the inspector wants.
- ◆ Don't point out perceived problems; let the inspector tell you what is a problem.
- ◆ Correct non-compliant items immediately (during the inspection) if possible.
- ◆ Bring along a camera and take photographs of any conditions that the inspector photographs.
- ◆ Subjects an inspector may look for:
  - Records (of training, self-inspections, monitoring, waste manifests, etc.).
  - Internal operating procedures.
  - Knowledge of regulations/standards/permit conditions.
  - Follow-through on responding to issues (i.e.: accident investigations, responding to variances from permit conditions or repairing equipment that has been put out of service).
  - Good operational practices (in addition to strict compliance).
- ◆ Request a closing conference:
  - Ask about findings.
  - Ask about severity of any violations that the inspector reports.
  - Ask when you can expect a report - note: some local agencies will give you a report at the conclusion of the inspection. Some state or federal agencies may take months to issue a report.

### After the inspection:

- ◆ Contact the EH&S office and provide summary of the inspection. We may be able to help you with corrective actions or interpretations of the regulations.
- ◆ Follow-up on any items agreed to during the inspection.
- ◆ Adhere to any corrective action or submittal deadlines.
- ◆ Retain a copy of the inspection report.

#### **Do's**

Be honest  
Understand the purpose of the inspection and review relevant records prior to on-site inspection  
Listen carefully and understand each question before answering.  
Be sure responses are complete and accurate.  
Respond only to the question asked; keep answer simple and direct.  
Weigh answers carefully, being certain you have the facts to back them up.  
Limit comments to areas where you have "first hand" knowledge.

#### **Don'ts**

Do not speculate or answer hypothetical questions.  
Do not agree or disagree with opinions.  
Do not "ramble" or provide irrelevant information.  
Do not get offended by "why?" questions.  
Do not sign any admission or settlement of a violation on behalf of the University.