

SAFETY



The MIA New York Metro Chapter Discusses OSHA and the Natural Stone Industry



New Jersey Department of Labor Representative Randy Hauser discusses triggers that could cause an OSHA Inspection.

On May 21, 2014, Alpha Professional Tools hosted the third New York Metro Chapter meeting of the year, *Understanding OSHA in the Natural Stone Industry*. The event included 37 participants from 23 companies and featured a discussion of OSHA requirements as facilitated by New Jersey Department of Labor representatives Lou Lento and Randy Hauser. While a number of OSHA policies were covered, the group focused on variables that trigger an OSHA inspection, OSHA top violations, and how best to plan for a OSHA Inspection.

The afternoon started with a discussion about why OSHA regulations are important. Hauser said, "The best preparation for working with OSHA is prevention. The goal of OSHA is to abate a hazard before things happen."

Lou Lento then demonstrated this philosophy by pulling out a roll of duct tape and taping an extension cord to the floor. He said, "We can have all the

standards in the world, but if people do not follow them, they will get hurt." Lento concluded, "Safety issues arise through human lapses in judgment and it is the employer's responsibility to remain diligent and assure these lapses do not happen."

The discussion then moved to triggers that could cause an OSHA inspection. Hauser assured the crowd that OSHA has limited resources and does not want to waste the time of the government or companies on frivolous claims.

He explained that three things can trigger an OSHA inspection in New Jersey:

- Death of an employee;
- Substantial injuries to two or more employees on the same incident; and
- Employee complaint.

To minimize these triggers, Hauser suggests that employers have an interactive relationship with employees.

If employees feel comfortable speaking with management about health and safety issues, those issues will be resolved before they escalate to an injury or an OSHA complaint.

The facility walkthrough provided a great opportunity for Hauser to point out top violations an OSHA inspector would focus on during a walkthrough. Some of the violations identified include:

- Correct handling and storage of respirators and masks;
- Use of extension cords and, OSHA's preference for drop cords;
- Obstructions hazards in front of exits;
- Liquids in unlabeled containers;
- Confined space and inherent hazards;
- Fire Extinguisher inspections; and
- Guards on hand tools.

The final session covered how best to plan for an OSHA inspection. Lento suggested that a good inspection starts with planning. Before an inspection is announced, a company should decide what employees will be involved.

Another key to successful inspections include filing up to date employee documents. Lento suggested that the following documents should be easily accessible for the Compliance Inspector:

- Injury / illness records - OSHA logs;
- Hazard communications program;
- Emergency preparedness and evacuation plans;
- Lockout / tagout program;
- Respirator protection program
- Access provisions for exposure and medical records; and
- Training records

Lento concluded the discussion with insight about the Closing Conference. The Closing Conference is a time where the inspector speaks with the employer and employee representative to discuss the findings. The inspector will discuss all unhealthy conditions and potential citations the company could receive. After the CO report is completed, the Area Director will determine if citations will be issued for a company.

The MIA New York Metro Chapter program, *Understanding OSHA in the Natural Stone Industry* was the 3rd of 5 yearly events produced by the MIA New York Metro Chapter. For more information about the MIA New York Metro Chapter, please go to the New York Metro Chapter website at www.marble-institute.com/chapters/nymetro or contact Aaron Dahnke at adahnke@marble-institute.com.