

OSHA's On-site Consultation Program keeping millions safe

Free, voluntary program allows small employers, OSHA to work together

OSHA's On-site Consultation Program, which has existed in some form since 1975, is one avenue by which OSHA provides the research, information, education and training to employers described in the Occupational Safety and Health Act (passed in 1970). Specifically, the On-site Consultation Program is a vehicle for providing those essential components of workplace safety and health to small employers, for whom accessing quality training and education may be more challenging than for larger employers.

"OSHA's On-site Consultation Program was established to provide free and confidential safety and occupational health advice to small and medium-sized establishments nationwide, and in several territories, on how they can reduce the likelihood of workplace injuries and illnesses," said Kimberly Darby, an OSHA spokesperson.



son. "The intent was to create an avenue for OSHA and small employers to work together in a cooperative way to ensure the safety and health of workers across the country. By providing guidance, training, education and other consultative assistance to small employers at no additional cost to the employer, OSHA hoped to reduce injury and illness rates for workers in America."

According to Darby, OSHA's On-site Consultation Program has demonstrated a significant value to small and medium-sized employers in a variety of industries, and there are many examples of the program's success. In recent years, consultants have visited approximately 28,000 employers each year, and in federal fiscal year 2016, On-site Consultation consultants identified more than 106,000 hazards over the course of nearly 28,000 visits. This resulted in protecting more than 2.6 million workers from additional exposure to those hazards.

"By using OSHA's expertise to identify hazards and provide training and education so that small employers may develop their

own safety and health management programs, On-site Consultation has been able to help these businesses decrease workers' compensation costs, improve worker morale and increase productivity," Darby said. "The consultation is confidential and will not be reported routinely to the OSHA inspection staff. No citations or penalties are issued, and the company's only obligation is to correct serious job safety and health hazards — a commitment the company is expected to make before the actual visit and carry out in a timely manner."

Because consultation is a voluntary activity, a company must request it. The consultant will discuss the company's specific needs and set up a visit date based on the priority assigned to the request, the company's work schedule and the time needed for the consultant to adequately prepare. To find your local On-site Consultation Program office, visit the OSHA website.

For more information, visit www.osha.gov or call (800) 321-6742. ●

What happens during an On-site Consultation visit?

The on-site consultants *will*:

- Help you recognize hazards in your workplace.
- Suggest general approaches or options for solving a safety or health problem.
- Identify kinds of help available if you need further assistance.
- Provide you with a written report summarizing findings.
- Assist you in developing or maintaining an effective injury and illness prevention program.
- Provide training and education for you and your employees.

The on-site consultants *will not*:

- Issue citations or propose penalties for violations of OSHA standards.
- Report possible violations to OSHA enforcement staff.
- Guarantee that your workplace will "pass" an OSHA inspection.

INSIDE INDUSTRY

Portable machine tools: A new way of thinking about machining

Experienced machinists, fabricators, machine shop owners and OEMs use their trade skills and experiences to shape and reshape the world we live in. And in all cases, the question isn't whether they can machine complex metal parts and components effectively. The real question to ask is: Can they do it safely and efficiently for their customers and profitably for their employers?

Portable machining technology is still relatively new and unknown, whereas the industry tradition has been to bring the workpiece to the machine or machine shop. Portable machining allows operators to bring the machine tool to the workpiece.

A huge advantage of utilizing portable machining technology is the increased efficiency due to the flexibility of being able to move the operation. Matt Register, former machine shop owner and Texas Business Radio host, commented, "Being a machine shop guy, most of the time to do anything that requires machining, you have to take a piece of equipment from a plant wherever it's operating, disassemble, transport it to a machine shop, disassemble it some more, and then you get a chance to machine on it.

Now, this is an opportunity where right there on the plant floor you have the ability to come in and line-bore things, or do whatever it is you need to do right there. And that saves a tremendous amount of time, a tremendous amount of expense!"

Let's also be clear. It's a misnomer to say that portable machine tools are not as precise as larger stationary machines. One of the keys to precision machining is minimizing the deflection of the tool during cutting. An advantage of utilizing portable machine tools is the ability to locate bearings closer to the cutting force. This shortens the distance from the cutting force to the support or load path, which increases the rigidity of the tool. Greater accuracy can be achieved in some cases with a portable machine tool because the design allows it to adapt to the machining application. Today, machinists are finding more and more applications for these tools, and portable machining technology continues to evolve. A select few manufacturers are now designing customized and portable computer numerical control machine tools for precise machining applications that can't be supported by stationary equipment.

Saving time, money

There is no getting around the fact stationary equipment is very expensive and takes up a lot of space. Adding to this investment is the ongoing purchase of expensive training, consumables and costly repairs that can handcuff or even put a stop to your whole operation. For newer companies trying to get into the business, this expense can be crippling.

Some stationary machining traditionalists will argue quality will never be perfect. Heartburns like struggling to repair the part right the first time, not having a skilled enough operator or making mistakes during setup will create rework that can cause significant delays, added logistics expenses and considerable downtime downstream. And while the same can be said about portable machining, many companies are beginning to embrace portable machine tools, as they can open up opportunities for skilled machinists to take their craft on the road. Now they can do the work on-site, which gives them the ability to make these critical adjustments more efficiently for their customers.

Increased flexibility, efficiency and even greater accuracy in many applications is

increasing demand for portable machining technology all over the globe. Today it's not uncommon to see technicians operating portable machine tools in mines, refineries, nuclear power plants, shipyards, fabrication shops or aerospace manufacturing facilities.

For many, portable machining is a new way of thinking, opening up endless opportunities to increase efficiency and production. Today, we are even seeing some OEMs utilize portable machine tools to help them manufacture their own portable machine tools.

For more information, visit www.climaxportable.com or www.hstool.com, or call (713) 333-0260 or (225) 450-9950. ●



A portable flange facer being used to manufacture a circular mill.

By: DAVE BAKER, Corporate Vice President of Sales & Marketing and General Manager CLIMAX|H&S Tool

