

IWH Study Says OHS Inspections with Penalties Reduce Workplace Injuries



Ever wonder if the carrot or the stick is more effective in getting employers to comply with the OHS laws and take the necessary steps to protect their workers' Well, the results of a new study support the stick approach,

Government OHS inspections that result in citations or penalties effectively motivate employers to make improvements that reduce work-related injuries, says the study by a researcher from the Institute for Work & Health (IWH).

The systematic review of research led by IWH Senior Scientist Dr. Emile Tompa was published online in June in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine.

The research team set out to determine the strength of the evidence on the effectiveness of OHS policy levers in creating incentives for organizations to improve OHS processes and outcomes. The team reviewed 43 English-language studies related to this issue that were published in peer-reviewed journals between Jan. 1990 and June 2013.

Besides finding strong evidence that inspections with penalties reduce work-related injuries, the team also found strong evidence that inspections *without* penalties don't reduce injuries, which confirms that specific deterrence'inspections resulting in penalties'is much more effective than general deterrence'the possibility of being inspected, says IWH President Dr. Cam Mustard.

These findings reinforce the importance of regulators being out in the field and identifying, citing and penalizing non-compliant organizations, says Tompa.

But Tompa acknowledges that no regulator has the resources to inspect all workplaces and to levy penalties for all violations. So regulators may need to heighten awareness by actively communicating the consequences of non-compliance and possibly make information about non-compliers easily available to the general public, he adds.