

# Surviving an OHS Inspection: The 5 Things You Should Never Say to an OHS Inspector



The way you handle the actual OHS inspection process may have as much impact on the outcome as the health and safety conditions of your site. That's why the frontline workers who encounter OHS inspectors as they make the rounds can have disastrous consequences. This is especially true when the inspector points out a potential problem. Here are 5 statements you never want your staffers to utter to an OHS inspector. ([Click here](#) for an OHS Inspections Response Policy)

## 1. "I warned management about that problem"

Passing the buck to the higher-ups is a natural first instinct, especially if workers actually did try to sound the warning bells. But in the OHS realm, violations are a lot worse when they're 'willful' and 'deliberate,' when the employer is aware of them but doesn't take steps to fix them. Result: When workers let OHS inspectors know that management was warned of a problem, it significantly increases your liability risks.

## 2. "We have a policy to prevent that problem but everybody ignores it"

A safety policy or procedure that's not enforced can be just as damning as not having a policy at all because it suggests that your OHS program is a charade that isn't taken seriously.

Result: A comment indicating that safety policies are routinely ignored puts OHS inspectors on ultra high notice.

### **3. “We tried to fix the problem but it didn’t work”**

To an OHS inspector’s highly attuned ears, the message this sends is that you recognized that there was a safety problem and took it seriously enough to try and correct it but not seriously enough to monitor the solution and take follow-up corrective actions to ensure the solution actually worked.

Result: Your OHS program is reactive and not systematic.

### **4. “We just can’t afford to fix that problem”**

OHS rules tend to be prescriptive but not specific. They list the hazards you need to control but don’t specify the exact methods how. They also give you leeway to consider costs in deciding on measures as long as you reasonably determine that less expensive controls will work just as well. But what you can’t do is ignore a problem on the basis of costs. Result: Telling inspectors that you can’t afford to fix a serious safety issue is tantamount to admitting guilt.

### **5. “That’s the way everybody in our industry does it”**

Industry standards may be relevant in deciding how to handle particular hazards. But following an industry standard in lieu of an OHS requirement is never an option. Never. Result: Suggesting that you follow industry rather than legal standards is highly ill-advised.