



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development Department of Labor Standards

## Executive Order #511 Secretariat Health and Safety Management Plan CY 13 Overview

**Overall Purpose:** To guide you in creating an on-going system for comprehensive and successful health and safety management leading to a reduction in job-related injuries/illnesses and overall costs. We are challenging the belief that the current number of job-related injuries/illnesses and associated costs are expected and acceptable due to the hazardous nature of much of the work conducted by the Commonwealth's workforce. In fact, significant reductions are readily achievable if a focused effort is made to change the current health and safety culture through the framework of systems-based health and safety management.

### **Section 1: Roles and Responsibilities**

#### *Requested Actions:*

- Assign specific senior managers into a hierarchy of decision-makers for health and safety.
- Confirm the person serving as secretariat EO 511 coordinator or reassign.
- Formalize the role of the health and safety committees created under EO 511.
- Review other health and safety roles and responsibilities (e.g., health and safety staff).

*Purpose:* To create a mechanism for identification, prioritization, approval, and implementation of needed health and safety protections (e.g., safety procedures, safety equipment, training, etc.).

### **Section 2: Health and Safety Benchmarks/Standards and Goals**

#### *Requested Actions:*

- Identify the worker protection standards of practice to be used as the technical basis for the secretariat's worker protection programs and methods (recommended: OSHA and equivalent nationally-recognized consensus standards).
- Optionally identify any health and safety goals for the year, such as a certain percentage reduction in comp costs.

*Purpose:* There is a highly technical aspect to worker protection, with important details necessary for the safety procedures or equipment to be effective in keeping workers safe. This information does not need to be developed by each secretariat, but already exists in

the form of the nationally-recognized worker protection standards and guidelines, such as the OSHA standards. The practices outlined in the OSHA standards have been shown by research to be effective in reducing injuries and illnesses. In some cases in state agencies, outmoded safety practices are in use, and money has been spent on protections that are not fully effective.

### **Section 3: Secretariat Fiscal Review**

#### *Requested Actions:*

- Review data provided on direct and indirect costs associated with job-related injuries and illnesses for your secretariat. (Department level detail is provided).
- Review your methods for health and safety fiscal planning and expenditure.

*Purpose:* Senior decision-makers relative to health and safety often have not been provided with loss information on the costs associated with comp claims. Evaluating this data may be instructive on the magnitude of the problem, and may also show that diverting a portion of loss funds towards prevention efforts will result in reduced injuries and cost savings over time. The current “acceptable losses” do not need to be accepted. Reductions in costs as well as in harm to employees are achievable through assessment and targeted action.

### **Section 4: Target Hazard Planning**

#### *Requested Actions:*

- Review data provided on comp losses by hazard for the secretariat (department level detail also provided).
- Review potential serious hazards not reflected in the loss data provided.
- Select one or more hazards for focused prevention efforts for the year.

*Purpose:* One or a few serious hazards may be the source of a high percentage of job-related accidents and workers comp costs for your secretariat/department and they merit targeted action, as a significant reduction in costs/accidents could be achieved by improved prevention efforts for these hazards. It is also important to compare the losses for the hazard against the cost of correction. In many cases, a preventive measure such as safety equipment was not purchased due to budgetary concerns, but then these costs were paid out many times over in losses from injuries due to this hazard.

### **Section 5: Review of Health and Safety Committee Data**

#### *Requested Actions:*

- Review the gap analysis work conducted by the health and safety committees.
  - *For a set of serious worker hazards, committees looked at what was currently in place for each hazard in the areas of: upper management support and policy, use of a technical standard, accountability, training, and controls (such as safety equipment or procedures). They then*

*compared what was currently in place against health and safety management ideals, and the OSHA standards, and identified any gaps.*

*Purpose:* Key information on gaps in your health and safety management system can be pulled from the committee gap analysis results. Also, specific areas for improvement relative to a set of serious worker hazards were identified through the work of the health and safety committees, but EO 511 did not outline the means and timeframe for prioritized selection and implementation of these measures. Note that the next step for the health and safety committees is to look at the full range of serious hazards affecting your employees, and create a health and safety needs list. From this list, senior management can coordinate with the committee on prioritization and implementation of identified measures.

## **Section 6: Accountability and Communication**

*Requested Actions:*

- Review your current methods for accountability, communication, employee reporting of health and safety concerns, employee input into prevention measures, and accident investigation.
- Select any action items for the next year you would like to take relative to improving these areas.

*Purpose:* Significant improvements could be made to health and safety at no cost to state agencies if the worker protections that are currently available were used more routinely. Creating accountability, including making sure that employees know when and how to use protective measures such as safety equipment, checking to see that they are used, and guiding employees back to their use will have a great impact. Other areas of communication such as employee input into hazardous conditions, early incidents, and near misses are also an important element to health and safety management.

## **Section 7: Specific Policies, Procedures, and Written Plans**

*Requested Actions:*

- Review existing health and safety written policies, plans, and procedures to see if updating or consolidation is needed, and then conduct this effort.
- Identify hazards/areas where a written policy, plan, or procedure is needed, and then assign these out to be developed.

*Purpose:* Concrete health and safety actions taken by employees derive from the health and safety policies, plans, and procedures that have been set forth by the secretariat or agency. If no clear policy, plan, or procedure has been developed, or they have not been formalized in writing, it is far less likely that appropriate protective actions will be taken. In addition, it is also important that these written policies, plans, and procedures are based on the most current technical information about best health and safety practices.