



AUG 16 2004

Mr. Ron Gantt
Trainer/Consultant
Safety Compliance Management, Inc.
111 Deerwood Road Suite 345
San Ramon, CA 94583

Dear Mr. Gantt:

Thank you for your May 28, 2004 letter to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requesting guidance relating to the training requirements under the OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.120, Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER). This letter constitutes OSHA's interpretation only of the requirements discussed and may not be applicable to any situation not delineated within your original correspondence. Your questions are restated below, followed by our answers.

Question 1: Is it possible to satisfy the requirements for 40 hours of classroom training solely through an on-line course or would there need to be a supplemental portion of the training reserved for hands-on training in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and work practices by which an employer can minimize risks from hazards?

Answer: In OSHA's view, self paced, interactive computer-based training can serve as a valuable training tool in the context of an over-all HAZWOPER training program. However, use of computer-based training by itself would not be sufficient to meet the intent of the standard's various training requirements. OSHA urges employers to be wary of relying solely on generic "packaged" training programs in meeting their training requirements since training required under HAZWOPER includes site-specific elements which need to be tailored to the individual worker's assigned duties.

Safety and health training may often involve the presentation of technical material to audiences that typically have not had formal education in technical or scientific disciplines, such as in areas of chemistry or physiology. In an effective training program, it is critical that trainees have the opportunity to ask questions where material is unfamiliar to them. In a computer-based program, this requirement may be accomplished through the provision of access to a telephone hotline at the time the training is being conducted so that trainees will have direct access to a qualified trainer at the time their questions are raised.

For HAZWOPER training, equally important is the use of hands-on experience and exercises to provide trainees with an opportunity to become familiar with equipment and safe practices in a

non-hazardous setting. Many industrial operations, particularly hazardous waste operations, involve complex hazardous tasks and exposures. Traditional hands-on training ensures that workers are prepared to safely perform their job assignments. The purpose of hands-on training (i.e., in the donning and doffing of PPE) is two-fold: first, to ensure that workers have an opportunity to learn by practical experience, and second, to assess whether workers have mastered the necessary skills. It is unlikely that sole reliance on a computer-based training program will accomplish these objectives.

In summary, OSHA believes that computer-based training programs can be used as part of an effective safety and health training program to satisfy OSHA training requirements, provided that the program is supplemented by the opportunity for trainees to ask questions of a qualified trainer, and gives trainees hands-on familiarity with protective equipment.

Question 2: Would OSHA find it acceptable if the only experience that an employee gets in regards to the required hands-on training be during the three days of field experience at the hazardous waste site and not during the 40 hours of classroom instruction?

Answer: No. Supervised field experience is part of an employee's initial training, taking place after he or she has completed the off-site classroom instruction. Employees must be able to familiarize themselves with the equipment and field conditions under which they will be expected to work. The initial three days in the field under the supervision of another experienced employee combined with the required classroom instruction is required for new employees.

As you may be aware, the California Department of Industrial Relations (CAL/OSHA) administers an OSHA-approved state occupational safety and health program for both private and public sector employers and employees in California. State plans are required to implement regulations that are "at least as effective" as the federal standards. If you would like further information regarding California occupational safety and health requirements, you may contact the California Department of Industrial Relations' Concord District Office at the following address:

California Department of Industrial Relations
Concord District Office
1465 Enea Circle, Bldg. E, Suite 900
Concord, CA 94520
(925) 602-6517

We hope you find this information helpful. OSHA requirements are set by statute, standards and regulations. Our interpretation letters explain these requirements and how they apply to particular circumstances, but they cannot create additional employer obligations. This letter constitutes OSHA's interpretation of the requirements discussed. Note that our enforcement guidance may be affected by changes to OSHA rules. Also, from time to time we update our guidance in response to new information. To keep apprised of such developments, you can

consult OSHA's website at <http://www.osha.gov>. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Health Enforcement at (202) 693-2190.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Fairfax, Director
Directorate of Enforcement Programs

Note: The original of this letter was scanned and placed into pdf format for ease of access by our site visitors.