

How to Pass an OSHA Inspection

OSHA inspections don't randomly happen. They're often triggered by incidents, complaints, elevated injury rates, and other signals of potential workplace safety concerns. Organizations that understand what drives OSHA inspections, and have systems in place to respond effectively, are better positioned to reduce risk, demonstrate compliance, and strengthen workplace safety.

If you oversee the health and safety of employees at your organization, OSHA inspection readiness shouldn't be treated as a last-minute task. Organizations with strong workplace health and safety systems begin preparation for the inspection long before an inspector arrives.

We've created this checklist as a companion resource to HSI's white paper, [How to Pass an OSHA Inspection: a Guide for Employers](#). It also builds upon the principles outlined in HSI's [Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#) to help you evaluate your organization's inspection readiness and identify opportunities for improvement.

To begin, review the questions pertaining to each of the 5 essential elements and ask yourself:

"If OSHA inspected my workplace today, would my answer be, yes?"

For any question that can't be answered "yes" with 100% confidence, this is an opportunity to strengthen your organization's inspection readiness and overall safety performance.

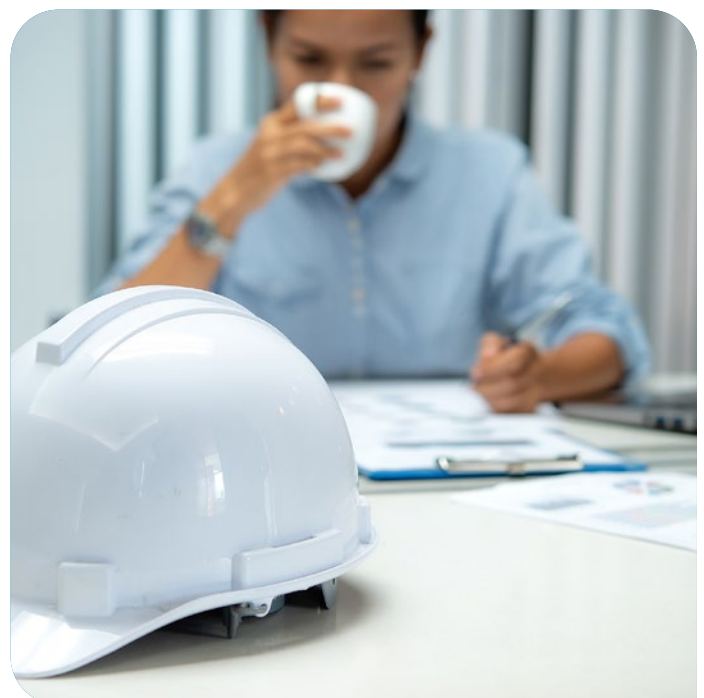
Please note that these questions are not comprehensive and all-inclusive but represent a starting point and contain the majority of what you need for inspection readiness.

First Essential Element: Administrative Must-Haves

The administrative paper trail is critical to OSHA compliance and inspection readiness. If it isn't documented, OSHA will often assume it wasn't completed.

Questions:

- Is the required OSHA signage posted at each applicable location?
- Are OSHA 300 Logs properly maintained and current?
- Is every recordable incident entered within the required reporting timelines?
- Are OSHA 300A summaries completed and posted as required?
- Are OSHA 301 incident reports maintained and accessible?
- Do you maintain current and accessible safety data sheets (SDSs)?
- Is there a designated individual responsible for SDS management?
- Have you verified employees can access SDSs without barriers?
- Do you maintain documentation for workplace inspections and corrective actions?
- Do you maintain documentation for equipment inspections and preventive maintenance activities?
- Do you maintain complete training records, including dates, attendance, instructors, and training content?
- Can required records be retrieved quickly during an inspection?
- Are electronic records backed up and protected?
- Do you train reception and security personnel on OSHA arrival procedures?
- Have you established inspection communication protocols?
- Do you conduct periodic inspection response drills?
- Do you maintain current facility maps?
- Have you identified high-risk work areas?
- Have you identified emergency exits and assembly locations?
- Can inspection representatives quickly access facility maps when needed?

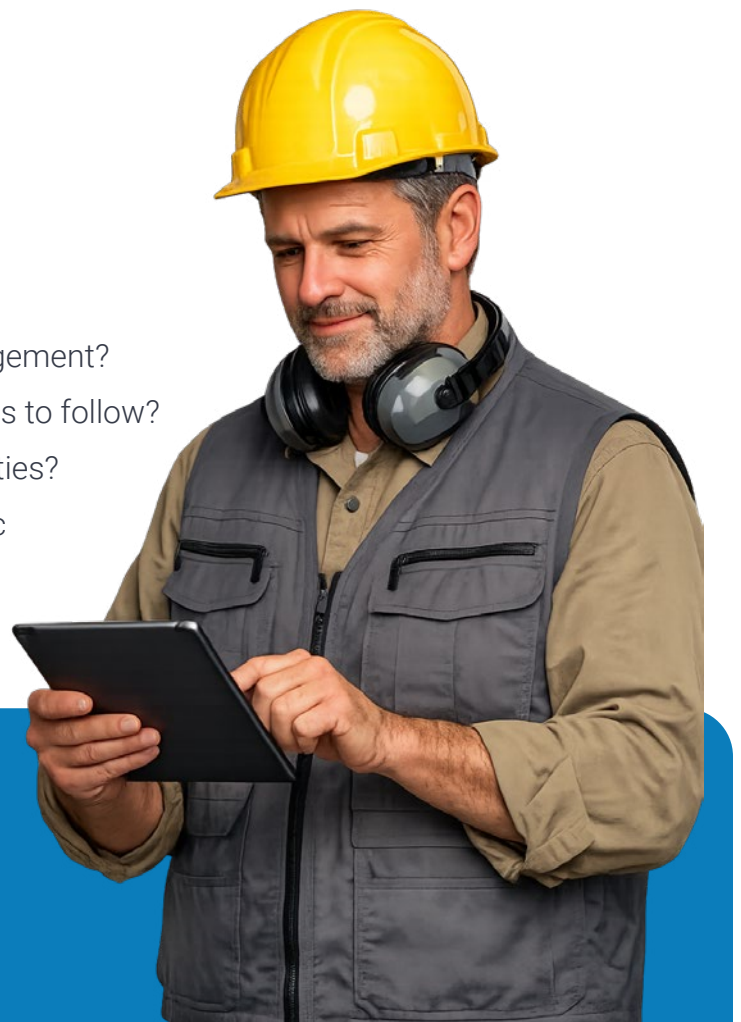


Second Essential Element: Policies

Policies and procedures establish expectations for workplace safety and help demonstrate compliance during an OSHA inspection.

Questions:

- Does your organization maintain written safety programs required by all applicable OSHA standards?
- Do you have a process for reviewing and updating safety policies regularly?
- Do employees review and acknowledge safety policies upon hire?
- Do employees review and acknowledge updated policies when changes occur?
- Have you identified OSHA standards that apply to your operations?
- Are EHS professionals involved when safety policies are created or revised?
- Do you maintain documented procedures for:
 - Hazard reporting?
 - Incident investigations?
 - Corrective actions?
 - Emergency response?
 - Hazard communication?
 - Lockout/Tagout?
- PPE (personal protective equipment) management?
- Are reporting procedures easy for employees to follow?
- Do policies clearly define safety responsibilities?
- Do emergency action plans address realistic workplace emergencies?



Third Essential Element: Safety Training

[Safety training](#) helps employees understand hazards, follow procedures, and demonstrate competency during OSHA inspections.

Questions

- Do you maintain a current list of required safety training topics?
- Are training requirements organized by job roles?
- Have you identified what training is required upon hire versus recurring training requirements?
- Has your organization completed a training needs assessment?
- Have you identified federal OSHA training requirements applicable to your workplace?
- Have you identified state or local training requirements applicable to your workplace?
- Does training include knowledge verification?
- Does training include practical demonstration or skills validation where appropriate?
- Do supervisors receive safety leadership training?
- Do employees receive training specific to hazards associated with their jobs?
- Do employees understand:
 - Hazards associated with their work?
 - Required PPE?
 - Emergency procedures?
 - Hazard reporting procedures?
 - Safe work practices?
 - SDS access procedures?
 - Applicable lockout/tagout requirements?
- Do you conduct toolbox talks or safety meetings regularly?
- Do you provide retraining following incidents, near misses, job changes, or policy updates?
- Is your training program reviewed regularly to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement?

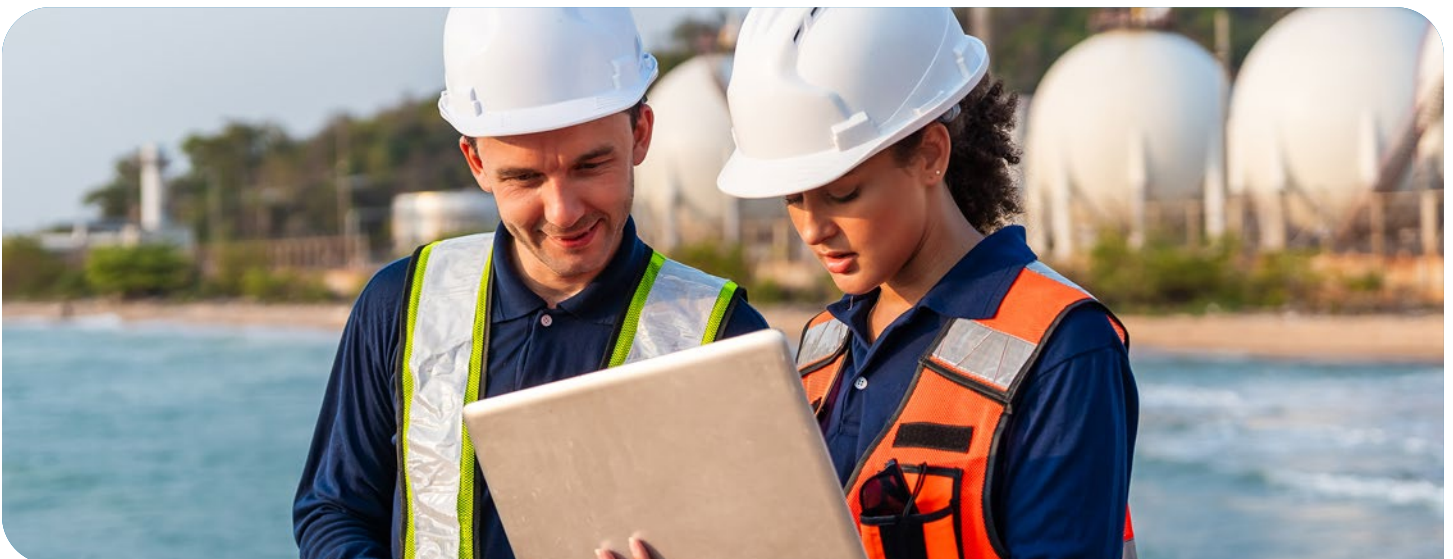


Fourth Essential Element: Tracking Risk

Organizations that track risk proactively are less likely to experience incidents, complaints, citations, and other events that commonly trigger OSHA inspections.

Questions

- Are workplace hazard inspections conducted regularly?
- Do you use inspection checklists that are reviewed and updated regularly?
- Are employees beyond the EHS department involved in inspections?
- Do employees receive training on hazard identification?
- Do you identify controls for known hazards?
- Do you verify and document that corrective actions have been implemented?
- Do you track recurring hazards and trends?
- Do you monitor injury and illness trends?
- Do you calculate and review DART (Days Away, Restricted, or Transferred) rates?
- Do you compare safety performance against industry benchmarks?
- Do you conduct internal audits and/or mock OSHA inspections?
- Does your organization maintain a documented remediation process when hazards are identified?
- Are remediation efforts documented and tracked through completion?
- Does your organization have a safety committee?
- Does the committee have defined responsibilities, meet regularly, and are recommendations implemented company-wide?



Fifth Essential Element: Reinforcing Behaviors

A strong safety culture requires consistent reinforcement, accountability, employee participation, and leadership engagement.

Questions

- Do managers and supervisors consistently reinforce safety expectations?
- Do managers communicate regularly with safety professionals regarding workplace risks?
- Is there a process for identifying non-compliance with safety policies and procedures?
- Do employees have a safe and reliable way to report hazards without fear of retaliation?
- Are anonymous reporting options available?
- Are employees informed when reported hazards are addressed?
- Are employee safety contributions recognized?
- Are employees involved in inspections, audits, committees, or safety initiatives?
- Do leaders visibly support safety initiatives?
- Is retraining provided when unsafe behaviors are observed?
- Is there a documented process for coaching, interventions, and corrective actions?
- Do employees understand their rights during OSHA interviews?
- Would employees be able to honestly explain:
 - Hazards associated with their work?
 - Required PPE?
 - Hazard reporting procedures?
 - Emergency procedures?
 - Safe work practices?

Final Readiness Review

If OSHA arrived today:

- Could employees demonstrate understanding of workplace hazards and safety procedures?
- Could leaders explain how risks are identified, tracked, and corrected?
- Could your organization demonstrate active employee participation in workplace safety?
- Could your organization demonstrate continuous improvement through inspections, audits, corrective actions, and training?
- Would your workplace present evidence of all five essential elements working together?

If you answered “yes” to most of these questions, your organization is well positioned to respond confidently to an OSHA inspection.



Additional Resources

[White Paper: What Triggers an OSHA Inspection? Here's What You Need to Know](#)

[White Paper: How to Pass an OSHA Inspection: A Guide for Employers](#)

[White Paper: Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#)

[Checklist: Five Essential Elements of Workplace Health and Safety](#)

[OSHA's Small Business Safety and Health Handbook](#)

HSI Can Help

OSHA inspections don't have to be overwhelming. HSI's comprehensive [EHS software](#) and [AI-powered tools](#) help organizations identify risks, document compliance, and streamline corrective actions. As the only provider offering a complete, integrated solution that combines powerful technology with subject matter expert (SME) reviewed [online training content](#), HSI ensures your team is always aligned with current OSHA standards.

[Request a consultation](#) today to learn how HSI can help you build a stronger safety culture.