

Editorial

Later this year the 5th anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 becomes history. All is not sweetness and light, but the crucial period of government harassment relating to the Act is behind the industry.

This isn't to say the Act is to be taken lightly. Rather, the enforcement approach has changed greatly. Today, the OSHA arm of government is talking voluntary compliance. A businessman, large or small, in some areas may request a trained OSHA consultant to visit his workplace, explain which OSHA standards apply, and point out where violations exist.

Under no circumstances — according to John H. Stender, assistant secretary of labor for OSHA in a recent speech — will records of the visit be used to trigger an OSHA inspection. This program is a cooperative venture with states which accept the program and funding is to be shared equally by the state and the federal agency.

The inspection or consulting program is a part of the voluntary compliance route now being pushed by OSHA. Stender reports that OSHA is putting together a variety of booklets, checklists,

and companion literature on standards to help employers, especially small employers. The idea is that they understand OSHA, develop their own safety and health programs, and conduct self-inspections of their own businesses.

Stender believes that self-inspection is an important and logical part of voluntary compliance. Employers, he says, know their own workplaces best and should be the first to know what the hazards are.

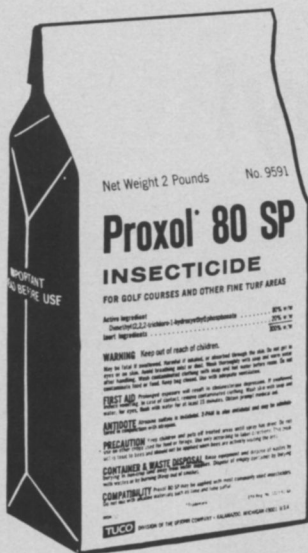
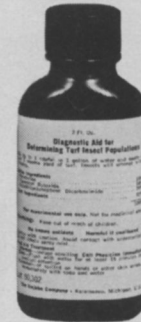
He further restates the position of OSHA as a regulatory agency, but recognizes that an effective enforcement program must be backed by an equally effective program of voluntary compliance. OSHA, he points out, cannot police five million workplaces which cover 60 million employees. This is why, he says, that the thrust of the agency has been directed toward reshaping a program directed at helping employers comply voluntarily.

In citing plus points for the agency, Stender said that work-related fatalities and illnesses dropped 7 percent between 1972 and '73. Work related deaths for all industries (including some not covered by OSHA) were down in 1974 by 5 percent.

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