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Standard Interpretations

12/11/1996 - Interpretation of the First Aid standard.

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• **Standard Number:** 1910.151

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>.

December 11, 1996

Mr. Gregory M. Feary
Scopelitis, Garvin, Light & Hanson
Attorneys at Law
Suite 1777
10 West Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2971

This letter is a follow-up to the conversation that a member of my staff had with Ms. Karol Copper-Boggs, of your firm, regarding the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) interpretation of the First Aid standard, 29 CFR 1910.151.

Ms. Boggs explained to [my staff] that a client of your firm had some concerns regarding OSHA's interpretation of 29 CFR 1910.151. [The] recollection of the questions asked of [my staff] by Ms. Boggs is as follows:

Question #1: "Must an employer have individuals trained to render first aid?"

Answer: Yes. The OSHA requirement at 29 CFR 1910.151(b) states, "In the absence of an infirmary, clinic, or hospital in near proximity to the workplace which is used for the treatment of all injured employees, a person or persons shall be adequately trained to render first aid. [Adequate] [f]irst aid supplies ~~approved by the consulting physician~~ shall be readily available."

[This document was edited on 8/19/99 to strike information that no longer reflects OSHA policy.]

~~OSHA's regulation does not set specific response time requirements for the term "near proximity", however, in areas where accidents resulting in suffocation, severe bleeding, or other life-threatening or permanently disabling injury or illness are likely, a 3 to 4 minute response time, from time of injury to time of administering first aid, is required. In other circumstances, i.e., where a life-threatening or permanently disabling injury is an unlikely outcome of an accident, a longer response time, such as 15 minutes, is acceptable. The rationale for requiring a 4 minute response time is brain death when the heart or breathing~~

~~has stopped for that period of time.~~

[This letter was edited on 6/12/02 to strike information that no longer reflects current OSHA policy. Please see the [4/18/02 letter to Mr. Mateus](#) for the current policy.]

Question #2: "If an emergency situation were to occur where first aid was necessary and a trained employee were to panic, forgetting all of their training, and no first aid or improper first aid was administered could the employer be cited?"

Answer: If a **trained** employee were to panic in an emergency situation and not administer first aid or administer improper first aid, OSHA would not cite the employer. The employer would have met his obligation under the standard by having individuals trained to render first aid. The standard only requires employees to be trained in first aid, but does not address the actual performance of first aid in an emergency situation. Please note, however, that OSHA would conduct an investigation, if deemed necessary, to ensure that proper training certification, e.g., First Aid and CPR certificates were in order.

Question #3: "Would an employer be in violation of OSHA's First Aid standard if the employer were to issue a policy which recommends that employees call "911" in emergency situations?"

Answer: The purpose of first aid is to give injured employees some level of medical attention as quickly as possible to bridge the gap between the accident and full medical treatment. Therefore, the rendering of first aid should be encouraged by trained employees in addition to calling "911." Thus, an employer would not be in violation of OSHA's First Aid standard by issuing such a policy statement as long as the policy does not discourage the rendering of first aid by trained employees.

I hope this letter is responsive to your concerns. If we can be of further assistance please contact [the Office of General Industry Compliance Assistance at (202) 693-1850].

Sincerely,

Raymond E. Donnelly, Director
Office of General Industry Compliance Assistance

November 19, 1996

Ms. Renee Carter
Directorate of Compliance
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Re: First Aid Training Statute 29 C.F.R. 1910.151

Dear Ms. Carter:

Recently, Karla Cooper-Boggs of my office discussed with you the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's ("OSHA") interpretation of the first aid training statute, 29 C.F.R. 1910.151. Outlined below is our understanding of that conversation.

You indicated that an employer must ensure that a number of its employees are trained in accordance with 29 C.F.R. 1910.151, but that the employer is not required to ensure that the trained employee actually performs first aid. You stated that OSHA would not issue citations to the employer if its trained employee(s) rendered first aid improperly, or not at all.

It is also our understanding that an employer will not violate OSHA regulations by issuing a policy which recommends that employees call "911" in emergency situations, and that trained employees should attempt to administer first aid at their discretion so long as such a policy does not discourage the rendering of first aid by a trained employee.

Please send me a letter as soon as possible confirming that our understandings outlined above are accurate. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Very truly yours,

Gregory M. Feary

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