

Your Rights Under the Congressional Accountability Act



Occupational Safety and Health

Section 215 of the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) requires that the Legislative Branch comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Act and its standards requiring that the workplace be free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious injury. Both employing offices and employees must comply with these workplace safety requirements.

Key Provisions Under the Law

- # The General Counsel of the Office of Compliance is responsible for investigating and prosecuting violations of unsafe working conditions.
- # Both employing offices and covered employees may request an investigation of a possible unsafe working condition.
- # The General Counsel may issue a citation or notice to the employing office that has employees exposed to the hazard and/or to the office responsible for correcting the condition when a violation of standards is discovered.
- # Employing offices are required to take appropriate action to correct workplace conditions that are in violation of standards.
- # If a hazardous condition is not corrected once a citation is issued, the General Counsel can file a complaint with the Office of Compliance and seek an order mandating the correction of the violation.
- # At least once each Congress the General Counsel is required to inspect Legislative Branch facilities and report to Congressional leadership on compliance with workplace safety regulations.

Frequently Asked Questions About Occupational Safety and Health

Q. Who can request an investigation of an unsafe working condition? Can an employee request an investigation if he or she finds an unsafe condition?

A. Yes. Both employees and employing offices may request an investigation. Former employees may also request inspections of suspected unsafe working conditions.

Q. Does an employee have to work for the employing office responsible for the unsafe condition in order to request an investigation?

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A. No. It does not matter where an unsafe condition exists. Any Legislative Branch employee may request an investigation of a suspected unsafe working condition, regardless of whether the employee works for the office responsible.

Q. How do I request an inspection of an unsafe working condition?

A. If you are a Legislative Branch employee or employer and believe you know of an unsafe working condition, contact the Office of Compliance General Counsel's office for assistance (see contact information below; forms are available on the Office of Compliance web site). All contacts are confidential, and those who request an inspection may remain anonymous if they so choose.

Q. How are facilities monitored for unsafe working conditions? Are all Legislative Branch facilities inspected regularly?

A. The CAA requires that the General Counsel periodically inspect all Congressional and Legislative Branch facilities for compliance with workplace safety regulations. These inspections include the Capitol building and all Congressional office buildings on Capitol Hill, the Library of Congress, the General Accounting Office, and any Legislative Branch facilities at other locations (including Congressional district offices). Results of these inspections are reported to Congress and are available to the public.

The Office of Compliance

The Office of Compliance protects the safety, health, and workplace rights of employees of the US Congress and the Legislative Branch. Established by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, the Office is an independent agency which provides an impartial dispute resolution process and educates employees and employing offices about their rights and responsibilities under the Act.

The Office of Compliance welcomes your inquiries. All contacts are kept strictly confidential. If you have any questions regarding OSHA standards as applied by the CAA or any other provision of the Congressional Accountability Act, please feel free to call the office, visit us in person, or view our web site at www.compliance.gov.

This information does not constitute an official ruling of the Board of Directors and is intended for educational purposes only. For further information, please refer to the Congressional Accountability Act (2 U.S.C 1301 et seq.) and the regulations issued by the Board, or you may contact the Office of Compliance.

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