



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Safety and Health Bills That Could Affect the Workplace

With the legislative session grinding on, now is a good time to update you on pending legislation that deals with workplace safety and health issues. The following bills are worth watching:

A.B. 815 The Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board would be required to adopt standards recommended by the state office that collects data on hazardous materials (the Department of Health Services' Hazard Evaluation System and Information Services). The board is the only state agency authorized to adopt, amend, or repeal safety and health standards. Proponents of the measure, including the Labor Coalition Worksafe! say it would close the gap between workplace and environmental regulations and keep workers safer on the job.

A.B. 1549 Acupuncturists meeting certain requirements could be appointed by the workers' compensation administrative director as qualified medical evaluators, and psychologists, acupuncturists, optometrists, dentists, podiatrist and chiropractic practitioners licensed in California would be permitted to enter into contracts with the administrative director to be independent medical reviewers.

A.B. 1709 Workplace posters would have to be written in simple, plain language. The goal is to reduce confusion and increase workers' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. A.B. 1709 failed in committee but was granted reconsideration, which means it may be heard again in January 2006.