

U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Inspector General  
Office of Audit



## BRIEFLY...

September 30, 2015

### OSHA NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ITS WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION PROGRAMS

#### WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE AUDIT

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to see what improvements have been made to the Whistleblower Programs since our 2010 report and the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) March 2014 report. In 2010, OIG found approximately 80 percent of OSHA's whistleblower investigations for three statutes did not meet one or more of the eight elements from its Whistleblower Investigations Manual that were essential to the investigative process. Furthermore, GAO's March 2014 report concluded OSHA interagency collaborative mechanisms could be strengthened.

#### WHAT OIG DID

OIG conducted a performance audit to determine the following:

Did OSHA improve the administration of its Whistleblower Programs?

#### READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full agency response; go to: <http://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2015/02-15-202-10-105.pdf>.

#### WHAT OIG FOUND

OSHA has improved administration of its Whistleblower Programs. However, opportunities exist for OSHA to further strengthen the Whistleblower Programs to ensure complainants are protected as intended under the various Whistleblower Protection statutes.

We found OSHA did not consistently ensure complaint reviews under the Whistleblower Programs were complete, sufficient, and timely. Specifically, 18 percent of whistleblower reviews did not meet 1 or more of the 7 essential elements specified by the OSHA Whistleblower Manual. Moreover, OSHA did not ensure the manual and training reflected the most recent program updates and changing priorities, and 72 percent of investigations were not performed within statutory timeframes. In addition, OSHA did not adequately and timely communicate the violations alleged by whistleblowers internally to OSHA's enforcement units or externally to other federal agencies with jurisdiction to investigate the allegations.

#### WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED

We made seven recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health to strengthen controls over whistleblower complaint reviews and improve communication internally with OSHA's enforcement units and externally with other federal agencies.

OSHA agreed with the recommendations and agreed more work can be done to continue to strengthen the whistleblower program. OSHA provided comments on a number of findings and did not fully concur with our estimate of incomplete investigations. However, nothing in its response changed our report.