

Pennsylvania company cited for safety violations

We trust that our employers are doing everything they can to keep our workplaces safe. If there is anything that can cause us harm or injury, we expect that we will be notified of the dangers. Employers are required to follow rules and regulations that will be specifically targeted toward a particular industry. Failure to adhere to any of these laws can result in penalties for the employer.

A Pennsylvania company was recently fined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for a series of violations, including failing to report workplace accidents and injuries. Exel, Inc., an organization contracted by Hershey's to package products, received nine OSHA citations and \$283,000 in fines.

Exel had participated in a program that brought in students from foreign countries to work during the summer in the U.S. Several of the student workers reported injuries from lifting or moving boxes of chocolate, which could weigh 60 pounds. The company was found to have failed to report 42 serious injuries and illnesses that occurred onsite over the four-year period of review.

OSHA became aware of the problems after many of the workers walked off the job and organized protests. The company plans to contest the citations.

Serious injuries and illnesses that occur on-the-job must be reported. Without proper documentation, it can be difficult to determine if a business is in compliance with all safety rules. Many of the violations that were handed down to Exel were related to record-keeping issues, and the high fines show how serious OSHA takes these requirements.

When workplaces are alleged to have unsafe conditions, all employees may be at risk. Injuries that require extensive time away from work can make it difficult for employees to make ends meet.

Source: Lebanon Daily News, "OSHA cites area firms after Hershey protests" Chris Sholly, Feb. 21, 2012.