



Department of Labor and

July 10, 2017

Mr. Eric S. Harbin, Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Labor
OSHA, Region X
300 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1280
Seattle, WA 98104-2397

Dear Mr. Harbin,

Thank you for the invitation to respond to OSHA's follow-up Federal Annual Monitoring and Evaluation (FAME) report for Alaska covering October 2015 through September 2016. Internal efforts and external monitoring are critical in achieving the division's goal of reducing occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in Alaska, and we continue to utilize the FAME with that in mind.

Alaska Occupational Safety and Health (AKOSH) has made significant changes to increase effectiveness and address program deficiencies identified in past evaluations. FY 2016 saw changes in middle and upper management, as well as the initiation of a leadership restructure. The division focused on training and brought enforcement staff into full compliance with AKOSH training requirements. Increased quality control and case file reviews have resulted in fewer case file errors. Through these efforts, we have resolved the majority of the previous year's FAME findings and have increased AKOSH's ability to accomplish its mission. This is clearly demonstrated by AKOSH's achievement of all but one of the program's FY 2016 annual performance goals.

While AKOSH continues to improve as an effective state program, there are challenges as well. High turnover results in lower overall productivity as new enforcement staff gain training and experience. The impact of this turnover is particularly visible in Alaska's whistleblower program. To address this, AKOSH has designated a new primary investigator for whistleblower cases, and has reached out for additional resources to address the case file backlog. The program is bringing on an experienced investigator to provide temporary assistance, and the division is partnering with Region 10 to bring the program into compliance with federal standards.

The effort to maintain "at least as effective" program standards as federal OSHA is challenged by the federal increase in maximum penalties, which requires legislation at the state level. House Bill 121 will bring AKOSH into compliance with the new penalty structure. This bill passed the House of Representatives and is before the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee, which will reconvene during the legislative session beginning in January, 2018. AKOSH is dedicated to continual improvement in our mission to ensure safe and healthy workplaces for Alaskans. We appreciate your support as we work together to accomplish that mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D Kelly".

Deborah Kelly
Director

cc: Heidi Drygas, Commissioner
Greg Cashen, Deputy Commissioner
Krystyna Markiewicz, Chief of AKOSH
Cecil Tipton, Acting Area Director, U.S. DOL, OSHA
Abby Lopez, State Programs Manager, U.S. DOL, OSHA

David Baker, Assistant Regional Administrator, U.S. DOL, OSHA