

**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF SAFETY
ENGINEERS ENCOURAGED
BY OSHA'S NEW POLICY ON ENHANCED
SAFETY ENFORCEMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diane Hurns (847) 768-3413
Michael Nowak (847) 768-3404

DES PLAINES, IL (March 17, 2003) - American Society of Safety Engineers' (ASSE) officials said today that they are encouraged with the recent Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) announcement to increase enforcement efforts against employers who flagrantly expose their workers to serious safety and health hazards and consistently defy occupational safety and health regulations. OSHA's 'Enhanced Enforcement Policy' is not a new regulation, ASSE notes, but a commitment to more vigorously enforce the existing workplace safety and health laws

ASSE President Mark Hansen, CSP, PE, said, "The unacceptable problem of these 'bad actor' employers, like those documented in the recent PBS Frontline/New York Times series titled 'A Dangerous Business' on worker safety, is long-standing. It is an encouraging development that the Department of Labor's OSHA will be taking these steps to force a relatively small number of employers who flagrantly disregard occupational safety and health laws, to understand and carry out their responsibilities. But this is not a simple problem. No matter what is done though, there always seem to be people who don't get the fact that when safety is integrated into a business, it not only prevents injuries, illnesses and fatalities but also contributes value to themselves and their companies.

"It will take a strong commitment from both OSHA and the private sector to deal fully with the problem, and ASSE hopes that OSHA's efforts will include the entire safety community in making sure this new policy is adequate and effective," Hansen added. "ASSE's hope is that the 'Enhanced Enforcement Plan' will prove to be a way to bring 'bad actor' employers to understand their responsibilities."

On average, 17 on-the-job fatalities occur every day in the U.S. and 5.2 million job-related injuries and illnesses were reported in 2001.

"Often, the problem in dealing with 'bad actor' employers is that each poses unique circumstances, so it's difficult setting exact punishments to cover all situations," Hansen continued. "For example, an OSHA citation for a serious violation in one workplace where the employer is trying to take responsibility for keeping employees safe cannot be treated like a Similar OSHA citation with a serious violation in a workplace where an

**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF SAFETY ENGINEERS ENCOURAGED
BY OSHA'S NEW POLICY ON ENHANCED SAFETY ENFORCEMENT**

Page 2 of 2

employer does not care. The difficulty is in how to define that lack of care. Safety professionals know it when they see it from an employer's attitude, history of injuries, illnesses and fatalities, and how they address hazards, but it's tough in a regulatory and legal way to define and enforce." According to OSHA, workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities cost the nation \$170 billion each year. Investment in an effective safety, health and environmental program is a sound business strategy for any organization, regardless of size. A safety and health program developed and implemented correctly can reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, lower turnover and absenteeism, increase employee morale and productivity, and result in a positive brand image externally and internally.

Organizations that place a high value on providing a safe and healthful workplace rely on the advice of occupational safety, health and environmental professionals like ASSE members to work to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses by ensuring that hazards that could lead to an unsafe workplace environment are properly controlled and/or eliminated. ASSE members are often employed or serve as consultants to provide advice to any size organization or company in developing and implementing effective safety and health processes and programs to reduce on-the-job injuries and fatalities. Many respected and profitable organizations and companies committed to safety go well beyond minimum OSHA regulations to a 'best practices' level creating a safe, healthy and comfortable work environment.