

Dear McGuire Team:

Most of you have seen the headline this week about our medical center being cited by OSHA for Unsafe or Unhealthy Working Conditions. The headline stated that two violations were Serious, four were Willful and eight were Other-than-Serious.

These statements are true. We were cited for these violations. Our veterans and their families, as well as each of you, deserve more than a headline. You deserve all of the facts.

In response to an anonymous complaint that an employee alleged she felt unsafe in her work environment, two OSHA investigators spent nearly 5 months at McGuire, inspecting the facility, observing the environment and the patients we serve, interviewing staff, as well as reviewing training records and report logs. They requested and were provided nearly 3,000 documents spanning a 5 year period pertaining to employee training compliance and required periodic OSHA reports. While their report is available to you on their website and I encourage you to read it, let me review the Serious and Willful citations in more detail.

Serious:

- 1. The Agency did not provide safety and health training for supervisory employees to include record keeping.*
- 2. The Agency did not provide specialized job safety and health training appropriate to the work being performed by the employees to include record keeping.*

In the VA, and especially the VHA, there is an abundance of training mandates and opportunities. Training is provided to all employees via our TMS system and in person. As we know, training is determined by your role at the medical center and it is up to the individual employee to complete. We do not contest that all employees are not up-to-date on their training. We ask that you review your training assignments in TMS and complete your mandatory training immediately.

Willful:

- 1. The Agency did not furnish a place of employment to each employee that was free from recognized hazards that caused or were likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Employees were exposed to the hazard of workplace violence and physical assaults while providing services and treating patients. The employer did not implement adequate measures to prevent workplace violence at the facility.*
- 2. The Agency did not provide specialized job safety and health training appropriate to the work being performed. Employees were exposed to the hazard of workplace violence and physical assaults while providing services and treating patients.*
- 3. The employer did not record each work related fatality, injury or illnesses on OSHA Form 300. 8 missing or incomplete records were recorded for calendar year 2015.*
- 4. All work related needle-stick injuries and cuts from sharp objects that were contaminated with another person's blood or other potentially infectious material were not recorded on OSHA Form 300. 1 missing record was recorded for calendar year 2015.*

We agree that fulfilling our OSHA recording and reporting obligations are important. We must and will be 100% compliant. We also agree that providing a workplace environment that is free from violence and physical assault is paramount. Over the past 2 ½ years, McGuire has implemented the following measures to enhance your safety:

- Increased the number of on-site Police Officers by 52%
- Implemented an enhanced Disruptive Behavior Program
- Installed new high-resolution security cameras
- Installed PIV card access in numerous locations
- Installed enhanced exterior lighting and police call boxes
- Provided active threat/active shooter training
- Reduced public access to areas of the medical center during off-tours
- Conducted physical and environmental safety reviews at all locations
- Reoriented clinical space based on safety recommendations
- Initiated progressive discipline of staff who assault or threaten others
- Installed computer-based duress alarms and panic buttons

Each of these safety initiatives, as well as many others will be on-going.

Let me assure every Veteran, family member and employee that we take your safety very seriously and object to the characterization of these citations as Willful. Willfulness implies that we intentionally put Veterans, families and employees in danger. **That has never been the case, nor will it ever be!** In the next few weeks we will be meeting with representatives from OSHA to correct the record.

While we give thanks next week for our blessings, remember that we are all working to minimize your risk of exposure to violence and allow you to provide excellent healthcare to Veterans and their families.

Thank you for all you do and have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Regards,

John A. Brandecker
Director