

Alan A. Cheever's Day with OSHA

BY PAULA MATHEWS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL GNADE

It is a sunny day in the town of Pleasantville, N.H.

Swiss Machining, Inc., comprising 25 employees, has been reasonably profitable since it started five years ago and future prospects look good. Even though the business is not seasonal, the month of April is pretty easy except for those pesky quarterlies, but the

controller deals with that headache.

The owner, Alan Cheever, is looking forward to a productive day spent catching up on paperwork when his receptionist pages him. She says that an OSHA inspector has unexpectedly arrived to audit the facility.

After a moment of panic, Alan thinks, "We haven't had any serious accidents here.

How much trouble can I be in?"

Alan enters the lobby with a smile on his face. "Good morning, ma'am. I'm Alan A. Cheever, chief cook and bottle washer around here. How can I help you?"

The OSHA inspector shakes his hand and says, "I hope that title means you will have the answers for me. I'm Patty N. Spectra from OSHA. I was driving by your building when I spotted your employee changing the lettering on your sign from the bucket of a bucket truck. I stopped because I noticed she was not wearing a hard hat and she did not have any fall protection in place; in other words, she wasn't harnessed to the bucket appropriately. That placed her in imminent danger of serious injury and I asked her to come down immediately.

"Your employee, Abby Normal, was very cooperative and complied right away. She indicated that the truck had been borrowed this morning from your neighbors, The Cable Guys. They told her about the harness, but she didn't think she needed it for the few minutes it would take her to do the job.

"I don't necessarily want to fine you for this violation, but I would like to review your documentation and discuss your safety programs. Do you have some time for me?"

Now Alan isn't going to refuse an OSHA inspector, so he proceeds to his office but his mind is racing: What documentation? We only had five minor accidents last year and I sent the paperwork into the Department of Labor on their forms. What else could she be talking about?

Patty launches into her offensive – "Alan, do you have a copy of the OSHA 300A form which you posted for your employees by January 31st?"

Alan pulls out a folder, which has the accident reports in them. There doesn't seem to be any form with that number on it. He asks, "Is that a new form? I'm not sure we received it from you."

Paula Mathews, a certified trainer in the operation of forklifts, sits on the forklift of one of her clients, MoldPro Inc. in Swansey. Mathews' business, HR Compliance 101, improves business operations by increasing her clients' awareness of workplace hazards and OSHA compliance. Bill Gnade/The Keene Sentinel



