

Matthew Deffebach in USA Today: What is OSHA Doing' Coronavirus Crisis Raises Questions About Workplace Safety Agency

April 17, 2020 Matthew Deffebach

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USA Today quoted Haynes Boone Partner [Matthew Deffebach](#) in an article about how the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is drawing withering criticism from advocates who say the agency is falling down on the job, as the country contemplates returning more employees to work and reopening the economy.

Here is an excerpt:

Under federal law, the agency has jurisdiction over most workplaces in the country and can issue regulations and enforce them with inspections, citations and legal action. In recent weeks, OSHA has issued guidance on how to keep workers safe, such as encouraging employees who are sick to stay home and providing hand-washing stations. But the guidance is “advisory in nature” and “creates no new legal obligations.”

Matthew Deffebach, an attorney who specializes in OSHA cases, said employers rely on experts, especially the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, to identify known hazards and proper protective measures.

COVID-19 is clearly hazardous, he added, but there is uncertainty about abatement methods, in part because safety precautions vary for each job and industry.

Standards also are evolving with time. Deffebach noted in early March, he attended a Bar conference on occupational safety and health with more than 100 lawyers, including some who work for OSHA. During the California gathering, handshakes were common and there was no social distancing.

"We were all sitting around conference tables," Deffebach said. "It wasn't that long ago, but it seems like a year ago."

To read the full article, click [here](#).