



Introductions

Chysoula J. Komis

Introductions features profiles of OEHS professionals working in diverse sectors of the health and safety industry.

Chysoula J. Komis, PhD, CIH, CSP, RBP, a senior scientist and project manager at Colden Corporation, provides legal and technical advice to companies that are out of compliance or involved in other health and safety matters. She is also a visiting and adjunct professor of environmental health and safety at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa.

Prior to joining Colden, Dr. Komis worked as a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) manager at OSHA. Her duties included assessing annual program evaluations and teaching VPP training courses and application workshops. In a previous position, Komis served as OSHA's regional industrial hygiene coordinator in federal and state operations.

Dr. Komis received a BS in environmental science and biology from Marist College. She went on to obtain an MS in industrial hygiene and a PhD in industrial hygiene and toxicology from Drexel University. She can be reached at (215) 496-9237 or komis@colden.com.

What is Colden Corporation's Litigation Support Practice Group, and what role do you play on this team? We offer support to companies who are involved in OSHA-type litigation—companies that have had OSHA citations. We do research for them and give them abatement advice. For companies that have workers' compensation claims, we may do some research and provide them with advice about health hazards, technical advice, and background information. We also might get involved in tort claims, for example, if someone got hurt as a result of using a product.

Some of your previous positions have required you to testify in settlement and administrative hearings regarding cited occupational hazards. How do you prepare for this task, and what advice can you give others in the profession who may be called to testify? In testimony, I've been a factual witness—I was an OSHA compliance officer who had collected some sampling data and conducted the investigation. In my role now, I provide advice to attorneys who are involved in that type of litigation. The advice that I would give to anyone is to know your subject, do the research to be prepared, know the facts, answer the questions directly, don't go outside your area of expertise, and provide advice that helps protect workers and abate hazards, rather than protracting litigation for personal gain.

What is the value of OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), and what were your responsibilities as a program manager? I think the value of the program is that it provides a systems approach to safety and health at a work site. It helps identify the hazards that a company may have, implements programs to reduce injuries, and reduces costs associated with injuries, illnesses and accidents. More importantly, it really focuses on worker protection, like establishing channels for employees and companies to work together and get employees more involved with their own safety. So I think the program, if it's implemented properly, certainly helps companies reduce losses and improve employee morale and does a lot to enhance worker safety.

What do you enjoy most about teaching on the college level? The contact with the students—they're young professionals and it's an evening program, so many of the students already have jobs, and they come to class to enhance their careers. I like seeing them network with each other and providing tips on how to find jobs when the program is over. In the 15 years or so that I've been teaching, I've seen many competent students go on to have some really remarkable careers. It's been a privilege to be in that role. 