

Preface

As the title suggests, this book is about how labor and management bargain over hazards in the workplace. This subject has received relatively little attention to date in the growing literature on occupational safety and health policy, because we tend to think separately about government and private-sector activity to control job hazards. My premise is that public policy toward job safety and health can be improved if we begin to think about public and private-sector activity as complementary. This book analyzes how government might capitalize on the potential capacity of labor and management to abate job hazards on their own through collective bargaining processes.

Occupational safety and health is a particularly rich topic for scholars interested in the design of regulatory policy. Virtually all of the major issues that constitute the debate over regulatory reform become evident in discussions about policy toward job hazards. As a result, many of the insights gained in the analysis of this regulatory problem have application to others. I have tried to highlight generic issues by including sections that discuss how these issues arise in other contexts. Readers interested in other regulatory problems will want to pay close attention to chapters 1, 2, and 8.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I introduces readers to the technical, economic, political, and administrative problems that must be overcome if job hazards are to be controlled effectively. Part II evaluates the performance of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in addressing these problems, and reviews suggestions for reform. Part III explores one suggested approach—collective bargaining—in depth, through a series of case studies, and offers some ideas on how this approach might be pursued in practice.

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