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LABOR RELATIONS UPDATE
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SAN ANTONIO, TX
AFSA
American Fire Sprinkler Association

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Jason T. Hartzell advises and represents clients in a broad range of labor and employment law matters, with a focus on traditional labor law. He assists clients across the country with a wide range of issues related to labor management relations, including:
• National Labor Relations Board proceedings, including representational and unfair labor practice matters;
• Election campaigns;
• Labor relations assessments, strategies, and compliance;
• Labor arbitrations; and
• Collective bargaining
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The authority on fire, electrical, and building safety
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CURRENT ORGANIZING CLIMATE
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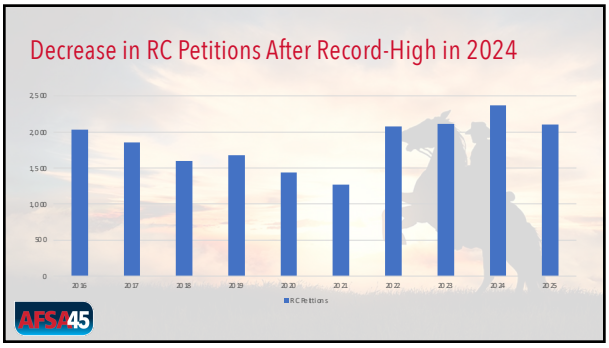
Decrease in RC Petitions After Record-High in 2024
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025
RC Petitions
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Activity in Sprinkler Fitter Industry
PLUMBERS • UNION • PIPEFITTERS • SPRINKLERFITTERS • STEAMFITTERS • SERVICE TECHS
669
SPRINKLER FITTERS
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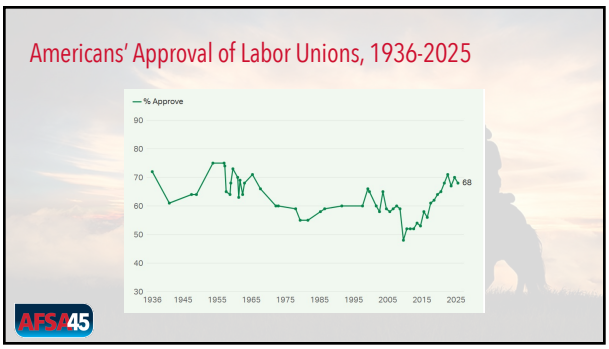
Americans' Approval of Labor Unions, 1936-2025
% Approve
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
1936
1945
1955
1965
1975
1985
1995
2005
2015
2025
68
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Why Would Employees Turn to a Union?
GOOD WAGES
JOB SECURITY
PROMOTIONS
GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS
INTERESTING WORK
LOYALTY TO WORKERS
TACTFUL DISCIPLINE
APPRECIATION OF WORK
SYMPATHETIC TO PROBLEMS
FEELING "IN" ON THINGS
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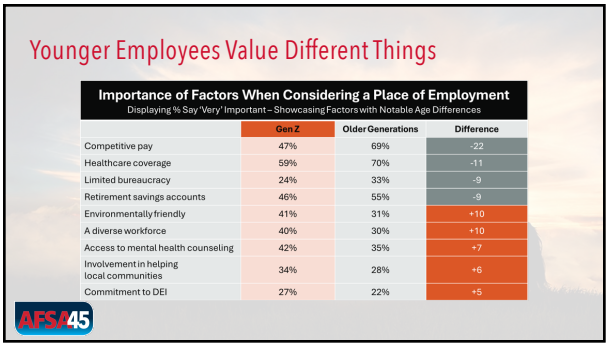
Younger Employees Value Different Things
Importance of Factors When Considering a Place of Employment
Displaying % Say 'Very' Important – Showcasing Factors with Notable Age Differences
Gen Z
Older Generations
Difference
Competitive pay 47% 69% -22
Healthcare coverage 59% 70% -11
Limited bureaucracy 24% 33% -9
Retirement savings accounts 46% 55% -9
Environmentally friendly 41% 31% +10
A diverse workforce 40% 30% +10
Access to mental health counseling 42% 35% +7
Involvement in helping local communities 34% 28% +6
Commitment to DEI 27% 22% +5
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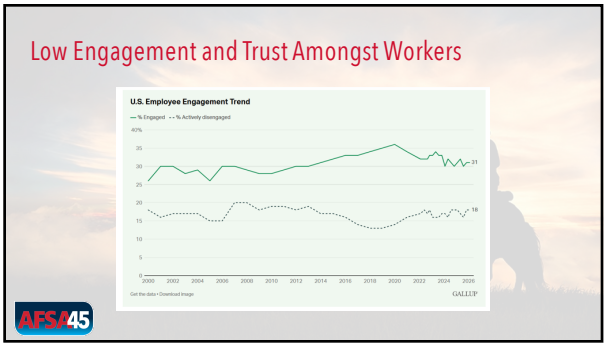
Low Engagement and Trust Amongst Workers
U.S. Employee Engagement Trend
% Engaged
% Actively disengaged
GALLUP
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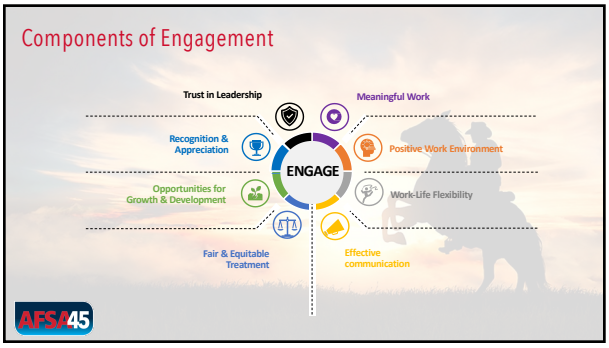
Components of Engagement
Trust in Leadership
Meaningful Work
Recognition & Appreciation
Positive Work Environment
ENGAGE
Opportunities for Growth & Development
Work-Life Flexibility
Fair & Equitable Treatment
Effective communication
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CHANGES AT THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD & LEGISLATIVE RESPONSES
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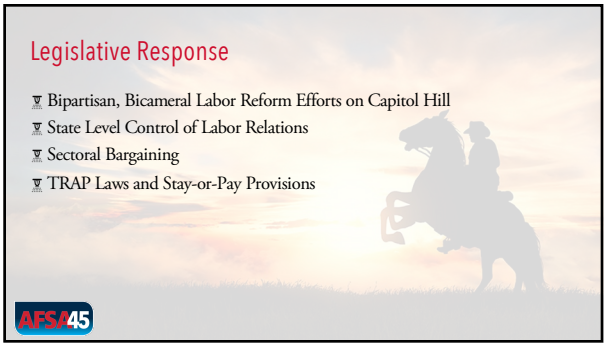

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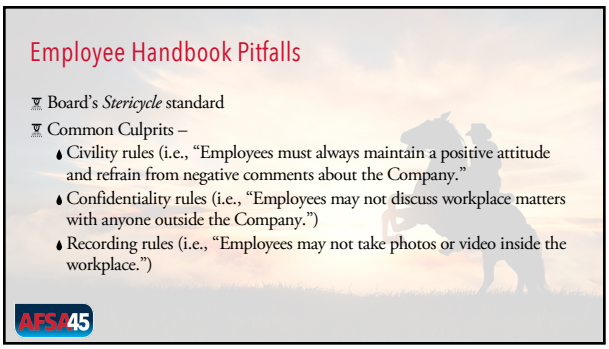
Employee Handbook Pitfalls
Board's *Stericycle* standard
Common Culprits –
Civility rules (i.e., "Employees must always maintain a positive attitude and refrain from negative comments about the Company."
Confidentiality rules (i.e., "Employees may not discuss workplace matters with anyone outside the Company.")
Recording rules (i.e., "Employees may not take photos or video inside the workplace.")
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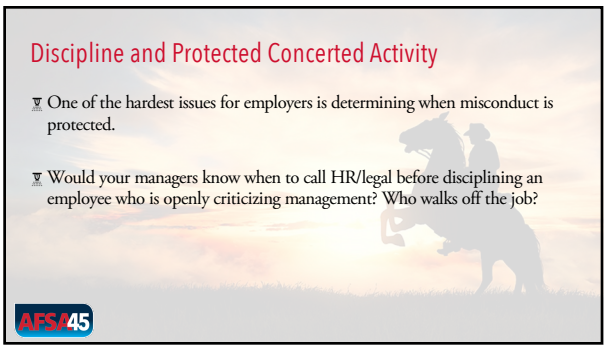
Discipline and Protected Concerted Activity
One of the hardest issues for employers is determining when misconduct is protected.
Would your managers know when to call HR/legal before disciplining an employee who is openly criticizing management? Who walks off the job?
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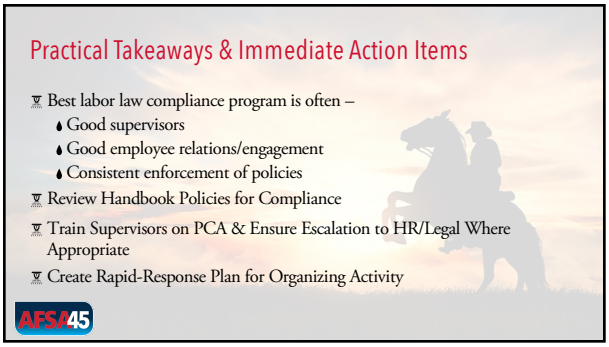
Practical Takeaways & Immediate Action Items
Best labor law compliance program is often –
Good supervisors
Good employee relations/engagement
Consistent enforcement of policies
Review Handbook Policies for Compliance
Train Supervisors on PCA & Ensure Escalation to HR/Legal Where Appropriate
Create Rapid-Response Plan for Organizing Activity
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QUESTIONS?
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REQUIRED
FOR CEU CREDIT:
✓ Badge scanned at start of seminar
✓ Attend full seminar
✓ Complete survey 1 of 2 ways:
✓ Survey link is emailed to attendees with scanned badges
✓ Event app by EventsAir
• Login to app
• Navigate to seminar survey
✓ Surveys close 10/31/26
Thank you!
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Scan QR code to submit questions for Ask the Experts!

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2027 Training Schedule

WEBINARS

1/6	Updates to NFPA 20
1/20	Calculating Pressure Reducing Hose Valves
2/3	Consumer Alert: Nitrogen in Sprinkler Systems
2/17	Reviewing Hydraulic Calculations
3/3	Updates to NFPA 13, 2028 Ed.
3/17	Updates to NFPA 13R & 13D, 2028 Eds.
4/7	Topic Coming Soon
4/21	NFPA 25: Roles & Responsibilities
5/5	Standpipe Flow Test Procedures
5/19	Storage 101
6/2	NFPA Technical Meeting - Voting Guide
6/16	Topic Coming Soon
6/30	Topic Coming Soon
7/7	Updates to NFPA 14, 2027 Edition
7/21	Adjacent Hazards & Design Methods
8/4	Acceptance Testing
8/18	Modifications to Existing Systems
9/22	Topic Coming Soon
10/6	Seismic 101
10/20	Proposed Updates to NFPA 25, 2029 Ed.
11/3	Evaluating Fire Pump Flow Tests
11/17	Top 10 Tech Reviews
12/1	Designing Water Storage Tanks
12/15	Pump Room Layout

PROGRAMS

Feb 9 - Mar 5 Apr 20 - May 14 Aug 3 - Aug 27** Oct 26 - Nov 19	Beginning Design School*
Apr 26 - May 7 Nov 1 - 12	Intermediate Design School*
Feb 8 - 10** Apr 12 - 14 Jul 12 - 14 Oct 11 - 13	Sprinkler Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Apr 19 - 21 Oct 18 - 20	Advanced Hydraulics Calculations Workshop
Feb 11** Apr 30 Jul 23 Sep 24	Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry
Mar 1 - 3 May 17 - 19 Aug 16 - 18 Oct 18 - 20**	NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop
Jun 7 - 10 Sep 20 - 23	Experienced Inspector Skills Lab
Mar 4 - 5 May 20 - 21 Aug 19 - 20 Oct 21 - 22**	NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop
Spring Summer Fall	ITM Inspector Development Program* *This program is 20 months.*

** Hybrid course **At General Air Products Lab, Exton, PA*

AFSA46

September 8-11	Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, CA

For More Details Visit:
firesprinkler.org

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Dates subject to change. Programs subject to minimum registrations.

rev 9/14/2026

Virtual Instruction Path (VIP)

for Sprinkler Fitting Apprentices

Level 1 - Begins January 2027

Level 2 - Begins February 2027

Level 3 - Begins January 2027

Level 4 - Begins March 2027

www.firesprinkler.org/VIP

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HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS FOR 2027

FEATURING AFSA'S TRAINING LAB

NFPA 25 Essentials Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Understand roles, responsibilities, and NFPA 25 ITM procedures through hands-on testing of wet systems, dry systems, and fire pumps.

NFPA 25 Fire Pump Workshop

Mar | May | Aug | Oct

Description: Develop practical NFPA 25 fire pump ITM skills, including no-flow and full-flow testing, water supply graphing, and performance evaluation.

Introduction to the Fire Sprinkler Industry

Feb | Apr | Jul | Sep

Description: This course is designed for those new to the industry. An introductory, wide-ranging 8-hour course that provides a broad overview of core fire sprinkler industry concepts for those new to the field.

Experienced Inspector Skills Lab NEW

Mar | Sep

Description: Take your ITM expertise beyond the basics. Designed for experienced technicians, this course combines focused classroom instruction with hands-on system lab training to strengthen your application of current NFPA 25 inspection, testing, and maintenance requirements. Refine fire sprinkler testing practices, improve documentation, deliver more consistent service, and help reduce liability while reinforcing knowledge commonly covered on certification exams.

Learn more about AFSA's fire sprinkler lab featuring functional risers, a spray room, fire pumps, and an interactive classroom.

firesprinkler.org/lab