

Kelly C. Knighton, CSP

The Knighton Consulting Group, LLC
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SUMMARY

Senior Workplace Safety Executive and Board-Certified Safety Professional with 30+ years of experience at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, including service as Regional Administrator for one of the nation's largest regions. Expert in OSHA enforcement, regulatory policy, workplace incident investigation, and litigation support. Proven track record advising federal leadership, shaping national safety initiatives, and serving as a fact witness in complex enforcement cases.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science – Major: Safety and Industrial Hygiene – University of Houston – Clear Lake, Houston, TX, Summa Cum Laude, 1994

CERTIFICATIONS

Board Certified Safety Professional
2006 – Present

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Owner and Principal Consultant

The Knighton Consulting Group, LLC (est. 2019)
Santa Fe, TX
January 2026 - Present

Serve as a safety expert consultant, delivering:

- Workplace incident investigation and root cause analysis
- OSHA compliance evaluations across construction, general, and maritime sectors
- Litigation support and expert analysis
- Advise clients on regulatory compliance, enforcement risk, and mitigation strategies.

Senior Technical Advisor

Directorate of Construction
U.S. Department of Labor – Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
Washington, DC

May 2021-December 2025

Provided strategic guidance on technical and policy matters related to the construction industry and advised OSHA field, stakeholders, workers, and employers on implementation and compliance implications. Conducted technical reviews of industry consensus standards and made recommendations for rulemaking of OSHA Construction standards; evaluated OSHA Review Commission decisions affecting field staff and employers' OSHA violation history and recommended training for staff. Analyzed 5(a)(1) (General Duty Clause) citations and provided technical and enforcement recommendations. Assessed and advised on OSHA's draft Field Operations Manual revisions; significant enforcement cases; and forensic engineering reports of catastrophic workplace incidents.

Senior Technical Advisor

Directorate of Technical Support and Emergency Management

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

Washington, DC

October 2019 - April 2021

Counseled leadership on technical and policy matters affecting the OSHA field compliance staff, stakeholders, workers, and employers. Conducted research and data analysis on OSHA regulations and programs for strategic long-term planning.

Regional Administrator

OSHA Dallas Regional Office

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

Dallas, Texas

October 2016 - September 2019

As one of 10 OSHA Regional Administrators overseeing the agency's third-largest region, directed all OSHA programs for Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, with oversight of the New Mexico State Plan. Led Deputy Regional Administrators, Assistant Regional Administrators, Area Directors, Regional staff, and 12 area offices. Collaborated with the Office of the Solicitor on enforcement actions and litigation strategy. Directed the nation's largest Voluntary Protection Program and (VPP) and Whistleblower Protection Program (WBPP). Oversaw 21(d) state consultation and 23(g) grants program.

Advanced OSHA's Directorate of Construction by advising and recommending appropriate actions for letters of interpretations on whether to archive or revise; assessed and advised on the updated trenching and excavation OSHA instruction; and reviewed and issued recommendations on OSHA's draft criminal referral policy document.

Acting Regional Administrator

Dallas Regional Office

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

Dallas, Texas

January – March 2016

Oversaw all federal OSHA programs for Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and oversight of the New Mexico State plan. Led Deputy Regional Administrators, Assistant Regional Administrators, Area Directors, regional staff across 12 area offices. Coordinated with OSHA's Regional Solicitor regarding enforcement case outcomes and strategy alignment on OSHA and Whistleblower enforcement.

Deputy Regional Administrator

OSHA Dallas Regional Office

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

Dallas, Texas

December 2014 – October 2016

Oversaw a \$31 million regional budget and directed Human Capital, IT, enforcement, cooperative, and state programs for a workforce of over 250 employees. Supervised senior leadership staff and managed region-wide safety and health initiatives. Served as the lead field advisor for nationwide Modified Citation Process workgroup and pilot program. Established and led a Regional VPP Management Committee and Challenge group to promote best practices and program sustainability. Contributed to the development of OSHA's first Manager Training directive, advising on curriculum design and leadership development.

Acting Deputy Regional Administrator

OSHA Dallas Regional Office

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

Dallas, Texas

February - March 2014

Provided leadership and oversight of regional area office managers comprising of safety specialists, industrial hygienists, and engineers. Monitored and tracked performance goals of the region and directed area offices (AO) to develop plans to meet their inspection goals. Established a Region-wide policy for reporting enforcement actions on VPP sites. Assessed and guided significant enforcement cases and presentations for submission and introduction to the Assistant Secretary.

Area Director

OSHA San Antonio Area Office

U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA

San Antonio, Texas

July 2012 – December 2014

Managed multidisciplinary teams across a 17-county jurisdiction, ensuring achievement of enforcement Field Operations Program Plan objectives. Issued citations and negotiated resolutions with employers to achieve compliance and penalty settlements.

Selected by OSHA's Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) to shadow OSHA national leadership at headquarters. Provided field informed strategic input during Executive Staff meetings and contributed to national emphasis program development. Proposed and led a plain-language redesign of citation packages, improving employer comprehension, increasing abatement rates, and reducing contested cases.

Assistant Area Director

Houston North/South Area Offices
U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA
Houston, Texas
May 2004 - July 2012

Supervised, supported, and managed multi-disciplinary teams comprised of safety specialists, industrial hygienists, and safety engineers. Led team investigations on high-profile investigations. Mentored and trained compliance staff. Oversaw Rapid Response operations addressing complaints, fatalities, and catastrophic events across multiple industries. Conducted informal settlement conferences and negotiated resolution of OSHA citations and penalties. Served as a in depositions and trial proceedings. Managed and tracked Regional and National emphasis programs and Site-Specific Targeting (SST) inspections. Coordinated with the Dallas OSHA Office of the Solicitor and respondent's attorneys in the development of site agreements for complex inspections.

Compliance Assistance Specialist

Houston North Area Office
U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA
Houston, Texas
August 2001 - May 2004

Designed and delivered OSHA training programs for compliance staff, industry groups, and government agencies on OSHA general industry and construction standards. Served as a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) audit team member; developed and maintained comprehensive area office outreach plan, partnerships, and alliances.

Compliance Safety and Health Officer, Safety Specialist

Houston North/South Area Office
U.S. Department of Labor – OSHA
Houston, Texas
February 1995 - August 2001

Conducted programmed and unprogrammed inspections involving fatalities, catastrophes, complaints, and referrals across multiple industries resulting in significant cases (penalties exceeding \$100,000).

Advisory Boards

- Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board, University of Houston – Clear Lake, 2020-Present

Workgroups

- OSHA Challenge Revitalization project
- OSHA Modified Citation Process
- OSHA Manager's Training Directive
- OSHA Manager's Course Curriculum Development
- OSHA Data Dashboard – Regional representative
- Assistant Area Director Development Program - Chair
- OSHA Dallas Region – Enforcement Programs – Significant Case Reviewer.

Regional Task Forces

- Regional Incident Commander – Hurricane Harvey
- Planning Operations Chief - Houston Command Center – Hurricanes Ike and Rita. Developed response activities and daily situation reports.
- OSHA Liaison for Hurricane Katrina – Area Field Operations Command Center, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Training

- Federal Executive Institute, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2017)
- OSHA Deputy Leadership (2015, 2016)
- OSHA Training Institute - Safety and Health courses
- Texas Engineering Extension safety and health courses
- University of Texas at Arlington - Safety and Health courses
- University of Houston – Clear Lake – Safety and Health Courses

Awards/Achievements

- 2024 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Commendation Coin – OSHA's amended Walk-Around rule
- 2023 – U.S. Department of Labor – Certificate of Appreciation – 30 years of Service
- 2018 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exceptional Achievement Award - Worker Protection Award – Hurricane Harvey Response
- 2017 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exceptional Achievement Award – Professional - OSHA Manager Curricula Workgroup
- 2016 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exceptional Achievement Award – Professional - OSHA Manager Competency Model Workgroup
- 2015 – OSHA Assistant Secretary's Commendation Coin – OSHA's Manager Training Directive
- 2015 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exceptional Achievement Award – Supervisory – Assistant Area Director Training Workgroup
- 2015 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exception Achievement Award - Professional - Higuchi International Corporation Significant Case Team
- 2015 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards – Exceptional Achievement Award - Worker Protection Award – Fresh from Texas, Inc. Significant Case Team
- 2014 – Secretary of Labor's Honor Awards - Exceptional Achievement Award – Professional - Cardell Cabinetry, LLC Significant Case Team
- 2012 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Texas Barge and Boat, Inc. Significant Case Team

- 2010 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Rubio Construction, Inc. Significant Case Team
- 2008 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Hurricane Ike Response Team
- 2008 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – N SKY Construction Investigative Team
- 2006 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Hurricane Rita Response Team
- 2006 - Excellence in Government Award from the Gulf Coast Federal Safety Council
- 2005 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Goodman Manufacturing Significant Case Team
- 2005 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Northwest Pipe Company Investigative Team
- 2005 - OSHA Region 6 – Hurricane Katrina Response
- 2003 - American Society of Safety Engineers – Gulf Coast Chapter, Houston, TX
- 2003 - Crashing Through Award, Dale Carnegie Course
- 2002 - Executive Director's Award, Federal Executive Board
- 2001 - OSHA Assistant Secretary's Team Impact Award – Saw Pipes USA, Inc., Investigation

Invited Presentations or Speaking Engagements

- Commencement Speaker for the Spring class of 2020 of the University of Houston – Clear Lake

Professional/Society Memberships

- Member, American Society of Safety Professionals, 2007 - Present