OSHA vs. EU Safety Directives: Key Differences for Global Buyers

Buyers of aluminum profile bending machines often source equipment internationally. Knowing the differences between U.S.-based OSHA regulations and the EU's Machinery Directive helps avoid legal problems, import delays, and safety issues.

What Is OSHA?

OSHA is the U.S. safety enforcement body operating under the Department of Labor. The key standard relevant to machinery is 29 CFR 1910 Subpart O, which covers Machinery and Machine Guarding. OSHA focuses on workplace safety, hazard control, and employee protection. It enforces regulations through workplace inspections, citations, and monetary penalties.

What Is the EU Machinery Directive?

The EU Machinery Directive, known as Directive 2006/42/EC, governs the design and construction of machinery sold within EU member states. All machinery that falls under the scope of Directive 2006/42/EC must carry CE marking to be sold in the EU. Certain categories, such as partly completed machinery or some custom-built systems, may have different requirements.

This directive references specific EN standards, including EN 60204-1 for electrical safety and EN 12622 for press brakes. To comply, manufacturers must provide a technical file, conduct a risk assessment, and supply a declaration of conformity.

Key Differences Between OSHA and EU Safety Directives

Criteria	OSHA (USA)	EU Directives (Europe)
Jurisdiction	U.S. workplaces	All EU member states
Enforcement Mechanism	Inspections, fines, citations	Pre-market compliance, audits, customs checks
Marking Requirement	None	Mandatory CE Marking
Technical File	Not required*	Required and can be reviewed
Guarding Requirements	General (ANSI B11.19 as a guideline)**	Specific EN standards by machine type
User Responsibility	Employer responsible for safe operation	Manufacturer responsible for built-in safety

**While OSHA does not mandate a formal "technical file" like the EU, employers must maintain documentation proving that equipment complies with OSHA standards and is safe for use.*

***ANSI B11.19 is a voluntary consensus standard. OSHA may reference it as a best practice, but it is not legally binding unless incorporated by reference into OSHA regulations.*

What This Means for Buyers

U.S. buyers purchasing EU-built machines must still meet OSHA rules. A CE mark alone is not enough to satisfy local workplace safety requirements. On the other hand, EU buyers looking to import machinery from the U.S. must verify that the machine conforms to CE standards before it ships. Without the appropriate documentation, customs may block the equipment at the border.

Even if a CE mark is affixed, customs authorities may request to review the Declaration of Conformity and technical documentation to confirm compliance.

Some machines are built to meet both OSHA and EU requirements. Achieving dual compliance can be challenging, as OSHA and EU requirements may emphasize different aspects of safety or documentation, requiring careful engineering and verification.

These dual-certified models help support international trade and compliance. Regardless of origin, buyers should always request key documentation, including the CE Declaration of Conformity, a risk assessment, and a user manual in the correct EU format.

Inductaflex's Approach to Global Compliance

Inductaflex machines are built with international buyers in mind. Each machine includes CE Marking and can be configured to meet OSHA requirements. The documentation comes in dual languages, and safety signs follow both European and U.S. norms. Electrical configurations can be adapted to meet local grid standards, such as 400V/60Hz setups. Additionally, Inductaflex offers modular safety systems that adjust to meet the specific needs of each regional market.

Note:

While 400V is a standard voltage in the EU (typically at 50Hz), 60Hz is the standard frequency in the U.S.; this configuration may be specific to certain industrial regions.

Conclusion: Buy Smarter by Knowing the Rules

When buying machinery internationally, knowing how OSHA and the EU Machinery Directive differ helps buyers make better decisions. It also protects companies from delays, fines, or compliance failures.

Never assume a machine is safe just because it comes from a reputable brand. Always ask for documentation and check if the equipment meets the requirements for your region.

Inductaflex machines meet both OSHA and EU standards—ready for safe use worldwide.