

The Organizational Importance of Occupational Health and Safety



Occupational health and safety (OHS) is a multidisciplinary field concerned with the safety, health and welfare of people at work. OHS applies to any work activities conducted by the employer (or on behalf of the employer) that may constitute an OHS-related risk to employees, contractors, suppliers and visitors (any member of the public at any location in which they are exposed to employer activities).

Attention to health and safety is not just about being socially responsible - "it also makes good business sense. You should regard it as just as important as the achievement of any other key business objective. If materials, equipment and operational procedures are incorrectly handled during work, potential adverse effects to employees and the company could arise - "such as the development of occupational illnesses, an increase in absenteeism, a reduction in productivity and an increase in insurance costs.

Occupational health should aim to:

- Promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations
- Prevent worker departures due to health issues caused by their working conditions
- Protect workers from risks in their employment resulting from factors adverse to their health
- Place and maintain workers in an occupational environment adapted to his or her physiological and psychological ability

OHS principles and its methodology can be implemented only if employer and employee work together, and consider it a major target of importance in reducing and eliminating hazards.

There are many occupational hazards that might affect our health, categorized according to their nature: physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic and psychological.

There are some basics that need to be considered in the workplace for developing OHS and maintaining its effectiveness. These basics include:

- Control measures: The steps taken to minimize or eliminate the risk after a comprehensive study and analysis for all type of hazards that might exist.
- Risk assessment: A systematic identification, evaluation and estimation of the levels of risk involved in a situation, including their prioritization, control measures and the person responsible for implementation.
- Corrective actions: Steps taken to remove the causes of existing nonconformity or other undesirable situations.
- Preventive actions: Steps taken to remove the causes of potential nonconformities or other undesirable situations that have not yet occurred.

These basics items shall be the foundation to implement a comprehensive awareness methodology. It's highly recommended to detail this information and procedures with a specific OHS employee handbook before participating in a project or activity. Everyone must adhere to this policy in their daily work; it is the responsibility of the head of each unit/company to fulfil the intentions of this policy within their scope of operation.

A dedicated department or team should monitor and apply these procedures on all employees. This department is responsible for:

- Continually improving the OHS management system in order to prevent incidents in all areas of operation
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of OHS through ongoing training and communication
- Meeting or exceeding applicable legal, customer and other OHS requirements
- Ensuring that anyone who is engaged in the activities has been made aware of - "and complies with - legal and company requirements
- Setting objectives and targets to drive continual improvements of the group OHS management system

To make sure that OHS policies and procedures cover all mandatory needed items, hazards and risks must be identified prior to any setup. Here are some high risks:

- Climbing and working at heights
- Working with electricity
- Exposure to radio frequency and electromagnetic fields
- Control of environmental and occupational noise
- Lone working
- Driving and vehicle safety
- Handling and storage of chemicals
- Manual handling instruction
- Personal protective equipment
- Fire prevention
- Construction and civil work and management

Lastly, we have to make sure that every employer activity has a risk assessment. Suitable training and suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) must be identified and provided. And perhaps most importantly, note that all of the above mentioned procedures must be reviewed on a periodic basis for continual improvement and must be documented.

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