

Safety and health at work is everyone's concern

It's good for you
It's good for business



Good practice for enterprises, social partners and organisations



Managing risk
Protecting health
Improving business

A better workplace for all



European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work





A BETTER WORKPLACE FOR ALL

Making a success of a small business is demanding. Whether you're running the business yourself, working for it, or doing both at once, you may think, the last thing you need to worry about is safety and health. You may believe that it is something only big organisations need to consider. Wrong.

Safety and health is everyone's concern. It's good for you and good for the business you work in.

Many small businesses in the European Union have already discovered that placing safety and health at the heart of their workplace enables employers and employees to achieve better results for themselves, and their customers. Having a healthy workplace is an integral part of a successful company's quality management agenda.

Turning the Healthy Workplace Initiative into your reality: we show you how!



WORKING TOWARDS BETTER BUSINESS TOGETHER

"To those who say that safety costs money, I would say that the lack of it costs more."

*Paul Lampit,
Director of Insurance Services
Taylor Woodrow Plc*

Placing safety and health at the heart of your workplace will not only ensure you avoid the expensive costs of injuries and ill health. It will also improve the productivity of your business. Workers who are enthusiastic, well motivated and well trained, with equipment and materials that are efficient and well maintained, can result in better quality, better productivity, and better economic performance:

Just consider these results:

- Improved productivity
- Less staff absence
- Less staff turnover
- Improved quality

Businesses with highly trained, efficient workers, are recognised as quality businesses, and are often very successful. As a trained worker you will feel valued, and by demonstrating respect for you, employers can at the same time earn your respect. You will work harder, the business will perform better and the work completed more safely. The result is you will feel much safer and more professionally secure:

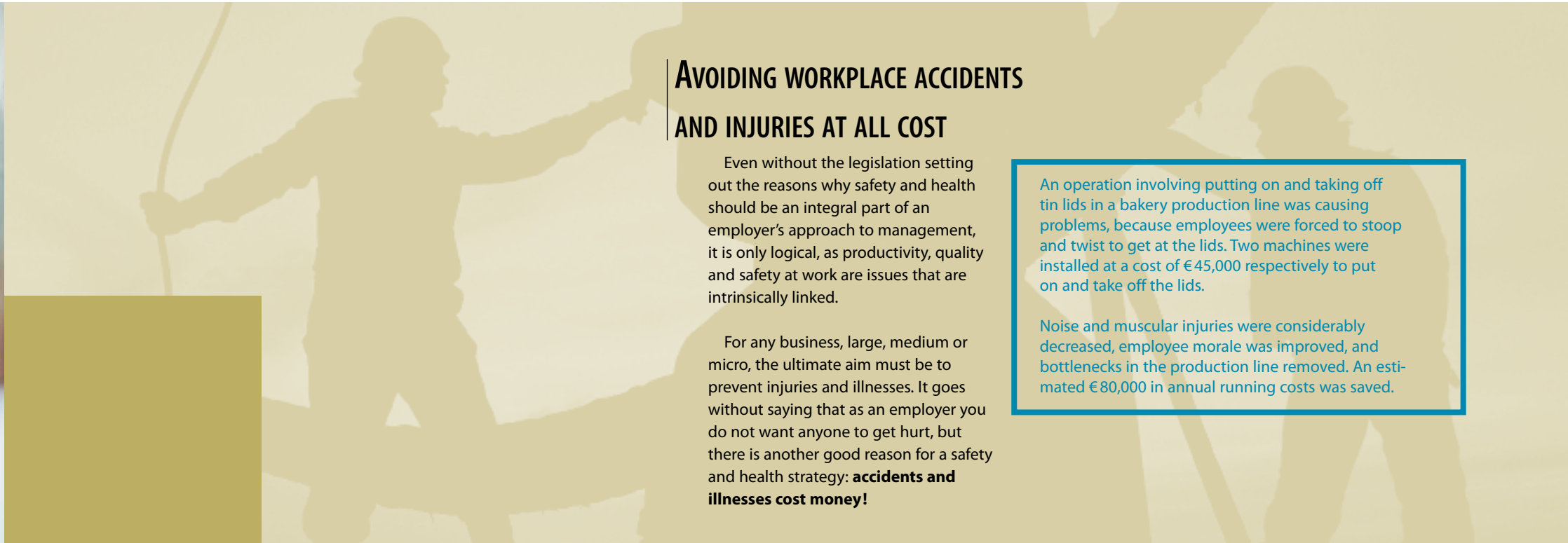
Just consider these results:

- Improved morale
- Less emotional stress
- Better pay and conditions
- Better prospects



"When I go out to the construction site and I am quickly reminded by my boss to put my hard hat on, he is also reminding me that he cares."

*Nigel Copthorne,
site worker*



AVOIDING WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES AT ALL COST

Even without the legislation setting out the reasons why safety and health should be an integral part of an employer's approach to management, it is only logical, as productivity, quality and safety at work are issues that are intrinsically linked.

For any business, large, medium or micro, the ultimate aim must be to prevent injuries and illnesses. It goes without saying that as an employer you do not want anyone to get hurt, but there is another good reason for a safety and health strategy: **accidents and illnesses cost money!**

An operation involving putting on and taking off tin lids in a bakery production line was causing problems, because employees were forced to stoop and twist to get at the lids. Two machines were installed at a cost of €45,000 respectively to put on and take off the lids.

Noise and muscular injuries were considerably decreased, employee morale was improved, and bottlenecks in the production line removed. An estimated €80,000 in annual running costs was saved.

YOUR RIGHTS TO SAFETY AND HEALTH

All European Union countries have legislation that set out measures to **protect** worker safety and health in order to **improve** quality in safety and security in the workplace. These laws are based on European Directives that lay down minimum obligations for employers and workers, covering the prevention of all types of risks and each activity or sector where risks exist. This legislation is in place to protect workers against occupational accidents and diseases and to assist in the prevention of occupational hazards.

And ultimately, every employer in the EU is responsible for health and safety in his or her business and for taking the appropriate measures such as ensuring the availability of sufficient resources, carrying out a risk assessment, informing, training and consulting workers.

In the mixing section of a bakery, operatives had to open and tip up to forty 25 kg sacks into a hopper every hour. As the level of sacks on the pallet went down, more stooping and lifting was required, with resultant back injuries.

The installation of vacuum bag lifter removed the manual element of the job, with a resulting increase in productivity, improved employee morale and a reduction in strains and sprains.

Also by law, every employee in the EU has rights (whether they are permanent staff, agency or simply a contractor) to work in places where risks to their safety and health are properly controlled, to join and be represented by a trade union and ultimately to look after safety and health **together** with their employers.

Just consider these facts:

You and your employees lose a lot of productive time; it's not just the person who is hurt or sick.

- Production time is lost while a process is down and it can take time for production to get going again.
- If there has been damage to equipment or the building, you may have repair costs.
- You may have to hire someone to replace an injured worker and take the time to train the new person.
- You will still have the costs of an injured worker's salary, plus compensation costs.
- Accidents and illnesses can lower morale for the rest of the workers and hurt their productivity.
- You will have to spend time completing paperwork about the accident.



GETTING STARTED

To enable your company to activate the right responses to safety and health concerns in the workplace, you need to prepare yourselves with the right resources and competences. For a start, verify what your legal obligations are as an employer. If your firm employs more than one person, you may wish to designate someone or some people to be responsible for health and safety, making sure that they have the necessary time, resources, training and authority for this role. Alternatively you may employ competent services or a consultant from outside.

The kind of support you need will depend on the type of industry, the nature of the risks, the size of your enterprise and what is specified in your national regulations. But, whatever the nature of your business, the best place to start is with your own employees. As the closest to the operational reality, they are indispensable in assessing the risks: faulty or inadequate safety procedures and equipment, poor ventilation,

workplace ailments that haven't been reported, maybe dangerous working practices you weren't even aware of! Your workers are there in the front line of your business: they know what could go wrong, so they're often the best people to tell you what needs to be done.

But don't overlook other aspects of your logistical processes where safety and health concerns may also apply:

- The selection process for contractors
- Your purchasing policy for equipment, products etc.
- Making safety training part of your overall training policy
- Having supervisors and foremen integrate risk prevention into all their activities.

FOLLOW THE RISK ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES, WHICH INCORPORATE THE HIERARCHY OF PREVENTION

- Avoid risks.
- Evaluate the risks which cannot be avoided.
- Combat the risk at source, for example if a machine is making too much noise treat the machine itself before soundproofing the room in which it is housed.
- Adapt work to individuals, such as through adjustable work surface heights, choice of working methods, avoiding monotonous work or paced-work.
- Adapt to technical progress or other changes, for example newer circular saws are better guarded than older ones.
- Replace the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous, such as using paints that do not contain harmful solvents.
- Develop a coherent overall prevention policy which covers production, organization of work, working conditions, dialogue between workers and management and the influence of factors related to the working environment.

- Give priority to collective protective measures and only resort to individual protective measures if the situation provides no other choice, for example eliminate noisy equipment instead of distributing ear protectors, or provide an effective guard-rail rather than an anti-fall harness.
- Give appropriate instructions to the workers.
- Check that measures are actually implemented and that they are effective.
- Revise your assessment regularly and when you introduce changes.

And seek to ensure an improvement in the level of protection.

Key practical information on how to conduct a risk assessment can also be found on the Healthy Workplace Initiative website at <http://hwi.osha.europa.eu>



PRIORITISING YOUR WORKERS

A company's greatest asset is its workforce, if this workforce is doing its job properly, carefully, efficiently and productively. Keeping employees and contractors informed about the job they are carrying out is straightforward enough, but telling them about the risks and hazards they may face and protecting them from these hazards may seem tedious. Yet it is an important role for the employer to ensure that workers are properly trained and protected for their jobs.

An employer should inform workers about the safety and health risks they might face, the appropriate preventive actions to be taken to overcome these risks, any first aid measures, as well as the necessary evacuation procedures in the event of serious or imminent danger.

Training does more than just help to ensure that work is done safely and that you comply with the law. It contributes to successful business performance. Effective communication and ensuring that the workforce is appropriately trained are key components of the quality management systems of successful enterprises. Trained workers can work more efficiently and trained workers will feel more valued and respected by their employers. Training should be given immediately on recruitment, in the event of a change of job or changes in work or where new technologies are introduced into the workplace, and repeated periodically if necessary. Information and training should be based on the outcomes of the risk assessment.

Training must take into account that:

- Some tasks or access to areas where there are serious dangers can only be given to workers who have specific experience/training and have received the appropriate instructions. Typical examples might include electrical work and maintenance activities.
- Information, instruction and training need to be suitable and understandable. For example, you must consider the needs of workers with disabilities who may need information presented in different formats.



TEST YOUR AWARENESS

Employee checklist

- Has your employer recently or ever undertaken a risk assessment?
- Have you received enough information and training to understand what hazards you are exposed to and how you may be affected?
- Is this enough to know what you have to do to keep yourself and others safe?
- Can you spot when things are wrong, and do you know whom you should report any problems to?
- Are you aware of the latest first aid and emergency procedures?
- Is your employer providing you with the health monitoring services you are entitled to?

Employers checklist

- Is there written information and clear instructions at every workplace?
- Has the safety information from equipment manufacturers' handbooks been made available in clear easy-to-read instructions for use in your workers' daily routine?
- Has a risk assessment been carried out and its findings communicated?
- Are workers asked regularly about potential safety and health problems?
- Has all relevant information, instruction and training on the hazards present in the workplace been provided to workers, including the precautions they should take to protect themselves and their colleagues?
- Do all employees know:
 - how to make full and proper use of all the control measures provided?
 - to whom they should report problems and defects with any control measures?
 - what they should do in the event of an accident, incident or emergency?

The employer should also bear in mind that **certain categories of workers are also more at risk of accidents than others and take this into account when planning measures.** These may include foreign employees that do not speak the same language and are unable to read safety instructions or temporary workers who are unskilled for the job they are asked to undertake. Or young people and new recruits who, due to their lack of experience, present hazards that are not evident or even anticipated and eventually need supervision: in fact these categories record a significantly higher rate of injury than older or more experienced employees. On the other hand, workers over a certain age may not be able to handle the physical

exertion required. Safety and health measures should be taken to protect workers, adapting work to allow them to work safely, not exclude them – which could be discriminatory.

A concerned employer is a clever employer. Ensure that you carry out effective **health surveillance** of your employees and workers in relation to the risks they run in carrying out their duties. Health surveillance may be as straightforward as workers reporting about their own health on a regular basis or perhaps regularly undergoing a health assessment by a qualified health professional or even a medical examination from time to time by a suitably qualified doctor.

Workers and their representatives have rights to actively participate in health and safety. Studies looking at best practice to prevent risks show that effective consultation and participation of the workforce, making use of their knowledge and experience, is one of the key success factors. So it makes good sense as well as being a requirement.

- Regarding health and safety, the employer must:
- consult workers and/or their representatives to ensure their participation
- provide them with the results of risk assessments
- involve them in setting up preventive measures
- respect their right to ask the employer to take appropriate measures and submit proposals
- allow access to the information necessary for risk assessment and to accident reports
- give them time off work, without loss of pay, and the necessary means to perform their functions.

Examples of things that employers must consult on include preventive measures, emergency procedures and health and safety training. Full details are given in national legislation, which, depending on the number of workers in the company, could include having a safety committee.

Operatives assembling telephone exchange equipment using electric wrapping guns with the assembly on a fixed height table registered high rates of sick leave and labour turnover over a seven year period.

A re-design of the working frame to make it more accessible and provide better posture support at the work station reduced turnover of staff by 75 % and sick leave by more than 92 %. The company estimated that the savings from the changes outweighed the costs by a factor of ten to one.

A secretary had three months off work because of pains in her neck and right wrist due to the poor positioning of her VDU, chair and desk.

After observation of her at work, the layout of her work station was re-designed (at a cost of €600). Better design ensured less stretching and bending. The employee no longer has neck or arm problems and has taken no more time off work. Cost savings include the cost of hiring temporary staff and the associated loss of efficiency.



FURTHER PRACTICAL ADVICE

1 Keep a record of incidences and accidents

- Speak to your employees and workers about potential 'near misses' when something goes wrong.
- Draw up, for the responsible authorities and in accordance with national laws and/or practices, **reports on occupational accidents** sustained by your workers.
- You may consider using an outside consultant to conduct an accident investigation. You should try to understand why the accident or 'near miss' occurred and what actions can be taken to make sure it doesn't happen again.

2 Look out for potential 'trouble spots'

- Accident frequency and severity: jobs where accidents occur frequently or where they occur infrequently, but result in disabling injuries.
- Potential for severe injuries or illnesses: where the consequences of an accident, hazardous condition, or exposure to harmful substance are potentially severe.
- Modified jobs: new hazards may be associated with changes in job procedures.
- Infrequently performed jobs: workers may be at greater risk when undertaking non-routine jobs.

3 Build safety and health into your standard practice

- Regularly track and monitor workplace safety and health: methods include workplace discussions, surveys, inspections, analyses of accident records, employee surveys.
- Screen the use of toxic materials, complex machinery and equipment, as well as any construction or redevelopment work which could pose problems.
- Analyse all relevant data: Material Safety Data Sheets, accident and illness records, exposure monitoring records, and registers of injuries, illnesses, grievances and complaints made to management.
- Undertake routine inspections of all workplaces and not just the high-risk ones!

4 Ensure worker cooperation

The main responsibilities to ensure safety and health lie with you, the employer, but workers also have a vital part to play. They must follow the instructions and training you have provided them and take care of their own and fellow workers' health and safety.

Workers must:

- Make correct use of machinery, apparatus, tools, equipment and substances supplied to them;
- Make correct use of personal protective equipment supplied to them, returning it to its proper place after use;
- Leave in place safety devices fitted to plant and machinery, and use such safety devices correctly;
- Immediately inform you, or the persons responsible, of any dangerous work situation and any shortcomings in the protection arrangements;
- Cooperate in all tasks imposed by safety and health regulations and cooperate actively with you, the employer, to ensure that the working environment and working conditions are safe and pose no risk to.

There are a number of ways you can motivate your employees, so that taking safety seriously comes naturally to them – and makes the process easier for you, too:

- Build safety into the culture and tradition of your business;
- Establish clear safety standards and measurements;
- Encourage your employees to point out potential improvements (offer incentives: organise suggestion schemes, competitions?);
- Reward, not penalise, the whistle-blower;
- Respond fast to concerns and suggestions, keep employees informed;
- Encourage an atmosphere of awareness:
 - place safety posters, pamphlets in the workplace
 - inform workers of their rights and responsibilities
 - invite guest speakers
 - offer work safety training programmes
 - publicise other workplace problems in your region and industry.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

A VITAL COMPONENT OF PREVENTION

What is a risk assessment?

Risk assessment refers to the process of evaluating risks to workers' safety and health from hazards at the workplace.

What is the purpose of a risk assessment?

Many European Directives relating to safety and health at work require an assessment of risks, but even without a legal requirement to perform an assessment, it is good practice to do so as it allows effective measures to be taken to protect workers' health.

The accident prevention process starts with the reduction and, where feasible, total elimination of potential risks, followed by the implementation of collective prevention measures and, in the final instance, personal protection solutions. By identifying the hazards and evaluating the risks, the employer, or person in control of the work should be able to:

- Take a decision as to the protective measures required, taking into account relevant legal requirements;
- Check whether the measures in place are adequate;
- Prioritise any further measures found to be required;
- Show that an informed judgement has been made on workers' safety and health (e.g. to workers or to the regulatory authorities);
- See whether an improvement in the level of protection to workers has been achieved.

A risk assessment

A risk assessment should match the hazards, risks and potential harm. For example, a large chemicals plant is likely to have a very technical system of assessment, whereas a small enterprise carrying out low-risk activities needs a simple straightforward system.

The risk assessment should:

- Identify the hazards;
- Identify the workers potentially at risk from those hazards;
- Estimate the risks involved;
- Consider whether these risks can be eliminated, and if not;
- Make a judgement on additional measures needed (if any) to prevent or reduce the risks.



A STEPWISE APPROACH TO RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Look for the hazards

Think about the work that is done and the materials, equipment, and chemicals that are used and produced. What can cause harm? For example:

- Heavy lifting that can lead to back injuries
- Working in a noisy environment that can cause deafness
- Working in a high-pressure office with a bullying manager, leading to work-related stress
- Operating a dangerous machine without any training.

Insist that your employees inform you of any problems they are aware of in the workplace.

2. Decide who may be harmed and how

Think about everyone who may be hurt. This means not just employees, but also contractors, self-employed persons, and members of the public.

3. Evaluate the risks and decide on action

Is someone likely to be harmed? If someone could be hurt:

- Can the hazard be removed completely?
- Can the risk be controlled?
- Can protective measures be taken to protect the whole workforce?
- Is personal protective equipment needed to protect the worker from a risk that cannot be adequately controlled by collective preventive measures?

4. Take action

After completing the risk assessment, list the preventive measures needed in order of priority, then take action, involving the workers and their representatives in the process. The steps to reduce the risk to workers should be part of the day-to-day work process. Talk to the workers and worker representatives. Involve them in the risk assessment process and tell them what you are doing to reduce risk.

5. Review the findings

Ways of working, along with changes in equipment and chemicals specifications. When a significant change takes place, check to make sure that there are no new hazards that need controlling.

THE STEPS OF RISK ASSESSMENT

- Identifying hazards – what might go wrong?
- Judging who might be harmed and how seriously, including employees, contractors, the public.
- Deciding how likely it is to happen.
- Deciding how these risks can be eliminated or reduced – can facilities, work methods, equipment or training be improved?
- Setting priorities for action based on size of risk, numbers affected etc.
- Implementing control measures.
- Reviewing, to check that control measures are working.
- Including employee consultation in the process and providing information on risk assessment results.

Taking action on your level of risk:

- If your risks are insignificant, then your assessment is complete.
- If your risks are controlled to a set standard then, if possible, make further improvements to ensure protection. With the assessment complete, make sure the prevention strategy is in place.
- If risks are currently controlled, but the control system could be prone to misuse, then determine actions needed to improve protection systems and outline emergency procedures in the event of failure.
- If there are possible risks but no proof that these will lead to illness or injury, then compare existing measures with standards of good practice and determine how measures can be improved.
- If risks seem to be adequately controlled, but not necessarily due to control measures in place, then adapt control measures to meet potential risks.
- If risks are high and not adequately controlled, then take immediate action to prevent exposure to risk, by stopping the work process if necessary.
- If there is no evidence as to whether a risk exists, then keep a look out for further information and apply principles of good occupational safety and health practice.

Operators at a whisky bottling plant where one brand of whisky needed to have a brass wire mesh fitted round it found the angle at which they needed to do the job was imposing repetitive strain injury and the danger of upper limb injuries.

Six new machines were installed to do the twisting of the wire once the mesh had been fitted (at a total cost of €40,000.) Productivity was increased with operators deployed elsewhere, there was 20% less waste of wire mesh, and noise levels were reduced from 90 to 80 dB(A). Estimated efficiency gains to the business of €60,000 per annum.





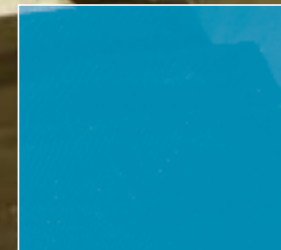
INTRODUCING THE HEALTHY WORKPLACE INITIATIVE

An initiative of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work to provide employers and employees with easy access to quality information about safety and health, the Healthy Workplace Initiative provides all the tools needed for a safe, healthy and productive workplace.

Visit us today at:

<http://hwi.osha.europa.eu>

- **Essential links to local trade associations, employer groups, service providers** for the latest in assistance with occupational safety and health.
- Information about **Government regulations** in the field of safety and health.
- **How other small businesses have** overcome similar challenges with simple, efficient solutions.
- **Immediate access to EU** information on legislation, initiatives and funding.
- **Practical risk assessment tools.**



Where to obtain further information

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