



Management Leadership in Occupational Safety and Health

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction: Why is occupational safety and health important?	6
Benefits of good safety and health	9
A management approach to OSH	10
OSH leadership self-assessment	16
Resources and further information	21
About	22

'In the 21st century, company management involvement in safety and health should be seen as central to the running of any business.'



Foreword



European companies of all types have made considerable improvements in occupational safety and health (OSH) over the past decades. Such improvements are due, in part, to the acknowledgement by managers that taking an active leadership role in safety and health is not only important for legal or ethical reasons, but also for sound business ones. This leadership guide is part of EU-OSHA's Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2012–13.

The overall campaign focuses on how companies, workers, their representatives and other stakeholders can work together to improve safety and health. This practical guide — *Management leadership in occupational safety and health* — is aimed at managers who wish to show leadership in safety and health. It highlights the ongoing need to improve safety and health and the role managers should play if they wish to be in the vanguard.

A thriving business community creates jobs and wealth and good management of health and safety in the workplace is key to this. Safe working conditions are an essential element for the quality production of goods and provision of services.

The success of a company depends on taking calculated risks. Prevention is the most effective approach to mitigate against these risks. It allows a company to limit uncertainties. In evaluating the risks and taking appropriate prevention measures, companies can improve their productivity and therefore also their profit margins.

Christa Sedlatschek,
Director, European Agency
for Safety and Health at Work



The protection of workers' health and safety is a real commitment for us at BUSINESSEUROPE. Companies are a key part of society and job providers. Therefore we will broadly disseminate and promote this guide. I'm convinced that it will be a useful tool in preventing health and safety risks at the workplace. Employers today must see health and safety policies as part of the way they run their business. With this common endeavour we invite employers and their management to exploit all possible opportunities to excel in the area of prevention of occupational health and safety risks.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Philippe de Buck'.

Philippe de Buck,
Director General, BUSINESSEUROPE



Introduction: Why is occupational safety and health important?

Every year more than 5 500 people lose their lives in the European Union as a result of accidents in the workplace. It is very difficult to quantify the health impact of occupational diseases in the EU and there is no consensus on the data. However, International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates suggest that 159 000 people in the EU die each year as a result of occupational diseases. European Union companies lose around 143 million working days every year to workplace accidents ⁽¹⁾. Estimates vary, but such accidents and ill-health cost the EU economy at least EUR 490 billion per year. Anticipating risks, implementing effective safety measures and rigorous follow-up are essential for reducing these figures.

Occupational safety and health (OSH) systems are designed to identify and minimise risks at the workplace. The effectiveness of such systems also affects business performance, either in a negative way if these systems are cumbersome or bureaucratic, or positively if they are well designed and function effectively. To have a positive impact, OSH systems need to function smoothly, in tune with rather than in contradiction to the overall management of the company and the delivery of production targets and deadlines.

In the light of this, it pays to remember that it is the legal (and moral) duty of employers to ensure the protection of workers' health and safety, as well as consulting workers and/or their representatives and allowing them to take part in discussions relating to safety and health at work. Management leadership on safety and health can support this.

'Prevention is better than cure.'



⁽¹⁾ 'Causes and circumstances of accidents at work in the EU' (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=207&furtherPubs=yes>).





Prevention is better than cure

Prevention is the cornerstone of the European approach to occupational safety and health. In practice, this means analysing work processes to identify short- and long-term risks, and then taking action to either avoid them as far as possible or mitigate them.

Benefits of good safety and health

Addressing health and safety provides opportunities to improve business efficiency as well as safeguarding workers. These have been analysed in the recent European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) ^(?).

Benefits can include:

- reduced costs and reduced risks — lower employee absence and turnover rates, fewer accidents and a lower threat of legal action;
- ensuring better business continuity, thereby increasing productivity — by avoiding incidents, accidents, breakdowns and process failure;
- improved standing and a better reputation among suppliers, clients and other partners.



*'Prevention is about managing risks.
Risks are managed by people
working together.'*



^(?) <http://www.esener.eu>

A management approach to OSH



Point 1: Effective and strong leadership

Leadership is a condition for success. A preventive approach is only likely to be fruitful if it is supported by the management. A strong and visible leadership and engaged managers at all levels can provide direction and input to this preventive approach. This makes it clear to everyone that safety and health are strategic questions within the company.

In practice this means that:

- management commits itself to occupational safety and health as a core value of the organisation and communicates this to the employees;
- managers have an accurate picture of the risk profile of the organisation;
- management leads by example and demonstrates leadership integrity, for example, by following all occupational safety and health rules at all times;
- the roles and responsibilities of different actors in preventing and managing health and safety risks at the workplace are clearly defined and planned and monitored proactively;
- OSH can feature in the company's sustainability and/or corporate social responsibility strategy and may be encouraged throughout the supply chain.

Management can show leadership on preventing safety and health risks at the workplace. Three underlying management principles are key for enhancing safety and health. These are:

- effective and strong leadership;
- involving workers and their constructive engagement;
- ongoing assessment and review.

These three points are explored in more detail below.

'A preventive approach is only fruitful if supported by management. Strong and visible leadership and engaged managers can provide direction and input to this preventive approach.'





Practical examples of OSH leadership include:

- visiting work stations to engage with staff about health and safety concerns (workers may not only identify problems but may provide solutions too);
- taking personal responsibility and showing that you care;
- leading by example;
- making available, as far as possible, money and time.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Oil refinery, Belgium

The Total oil refinery in Antwerp brought in contractors SPIE Belgium to help maintain pipework and machinery. It soon became obvious that there was a clash of business and safety cultures that had to be realigned if accident and sickness rates were to be significantly reduced.

After intensive efforts, the companies resolved key organisational differences and then focused on employee behaviour on the shop floor. Employees were encouraged to work responsibly and autonomously by training them to, for example, carry out a risk assessment before beginning a new task. The alignment of corporate cultures was achieved by means of intense, though largely informal, consultation.

These improvements resulted in zero accidents once the two companies had agreed on 'best practices'.

Success factors

Aligning the safety cultures of the two companies was only possible because of open communication, good leadership, the active involvement of the employees and the innovative approaches of the prevention services. The participation of senior management demonstrated to employees the importance accorded to all health and safety issues within the company.

Key actions within this process were:

- newsletters and information management;
- safety walks;
- toolbox meetings (short presentations to the workforce on a particular aspect of health and safety);
- extensive training courses.



Point 2: Involving workers and their constructive engagement

The two-way process of involving workers and their constructive engagement is important in the success of management initiatives.

Employers, according to EU law, must consult their employees about health and safety. This includes: provision of information; instruction and training; and engaging in consultation with workers and their representatives. Depending on national requirements, employers may be required to establish safety committees and the post of workers' representative.

Worker participation helps to establish a culture of dialogue. Workers and their representatives are encouraged to take part in health and safety decision-making. Some employers have found benefits in going beyond these legal obligations. They encourage active health and safety involvement on a daily basis and also include workers in additional forums such as working groups on specific topics.

Effective upward communication is key — workers are listened to and what they say is acted upon. Equally importantly, workers accept their responsibility to follow the health and safety rules at the workplace, and are engaged with management in a constructive and helpful way. This two-way process creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem-solving. And once established this culture has the potential for health and safety improvements.

Direct worker participation should not be seen as an alternative to a system of workers' representatives. They are two different avenues which can be used effectively, in line with national frameworks and the specific characteristics of the workplace.

Benefits of this collaborative culture may include lower accident rates, cost-effective solutions and a more productive workforce. These may in turn lead to lower absentee rates and better control of workplace risks.

Employee input is especially valuable during:

- risk assessment;
- development of policies and interventions;
- provision of pertinent observations during training and implementation.

'Worker participation helps to establish a culture of dialogue. Workers and their representatives are encouraged to take part in health and safety decision-making.'



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Strategy for preventing ‘needle-in-finger’ injuries in a clothing and textile company

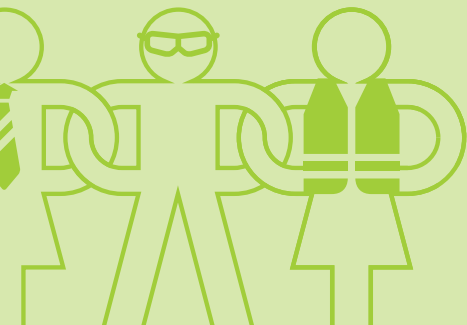
The managers and trade unions at a British clothing company discussed how to reduce the high rate of needle-in-finger injuries in sewing machinists, since the standard machine guards did not fully protect the machinists. A small team, including two machinists, was established at a specific site and was asked to design a guard that everybody could work with. Local machinists were then involved in testing the new prototypes. Where the guard was fitted, needle-in-finger injuries were eliminated. As well as having a positive impact on workers, this joint work also brought business benefits, by reducing the costs for the employer in terms of compensation claims and insurance premiums.

Point 3: Ongoing assessment and review

Monitoring and reporting are vital tools for enhancing workplace safety and health. Management systems which provide, for example, the company board members with specific (e.g. incident-led) and routine reports on the performance of health and safety policies can be useful in raising issues, highlighting problems and ultimately enhancing workplace safety and health.

Elements of a good assessment and review system include:

- procedures for reporting major health and safety failures to the company board members and owners as soon as is practical;
- systems for capturing and reporting accurate and timely incident data such as accident and sickness rates;
- arrangements for eliciting and incorporating worker views and experiences;
- periodic reports of the impact that preventive schemes such as training and maintenance programmes have on OSH;
- regular audits of the effectiveness of risk controls and management;
- assessments of the impact that changes such as the introduction of new work processes, procedures or products have on safety and health;
- effective procedures for implementing new and altered legal requirements.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Fine-tuning of assessment and review procedures following an accident in the flour milling industry in Italy

Three employees were injured in an accident which occurred during the routine maintenance of a flour-milling machine. The initial inspection found that safety procedures had been followed and that the equipment was not faulty. At issue was a machinery design problem. The plant was owned by a French milling group employing 160 workers in the Siena province of Italy.

The employer decided to take the investigations forward through the combined efforts of different stakeholders such as company executives, specialised employee health and safety representatives, the health and safety inspectorate and regional health insurance fund officials. The employee representatives on the health and safety committee, workers and supervisory staff helped to uncover the underlying causes of the accident.

The participatory approach was based on interviews with the operators and their proposals for improvements to the machinery design. The collective investigation showed that the design of the temperature monitor needed improving. The analysis also revealed that the accident happened partly as a result of understaffing and highlighted training issues. The investigation also led the Ministry of Labour to set up a process aimed at detecting and identifying failings in safety standards.



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© EU-OSHA/Jim Holmes

'Monitoring and reporting are vital tools for enhancing workplace safety and health.'



OSH leadership self-assessment

Just as you do not build a company in one day, it also takes long-term efforts to develop a sound prevention policy.

A good start is to verify what the state of play is on prevention in the company. This self-assessment tool allows you to gather the necessary information and the possibilities to improve the situation.

How does it work?

During the evaluation a certain number of aspects of the company's safety and health approach are highlighted.

- Prevention policy
- Leadership
- Prevention tools
- Information, training and consultation.

For each of these aspects, three elements are reviewed in the tool. For each element, you should estimate the attainment level in your company from the four descriptions. Indicate, for each of the elements, which description (A, B, C or D) corresponds best with the situation in your company. The final score is calculated with the help of the matrix.

Who should do it?

It is recommended that the evaluation is done by the CEO him- or herself. The evaluation can also be carried out by more persons, the final score being obtained by calculating the average or after a discussion leading to the identification of the most appropriate description for the company.

How to improve?

The score gives an idea of the level of prevention. The tool also provides you with inspiration and concrete possibilities for improvement by looking at the descriptions leading to a higher score.

'The successful companies of tomorrow are those which today have been able to combine the vision and the foresight to invest in innovation and in the health and safety of their workers.'



A B C D

Prevention policy				
Prevention policy targets	No safety and health targets are set.	General safety and health targets are set.	Specific safety and health targets are set and reviewed now and then.	Specific safety and health indicators are measured and the policy is adapted accordingly to ensure continuous improvement.
Policy statement	There is no health and safety policy statement.	There is a general and vague health and safety policy statement.	A clear policy statement that expresses the company's engagement is drafted.	A clear policy statement showing the company's engagement is communicated to workers and clients.
Action plans	Measures in the field of safety and health are taken now and then (after accidents, an inspection visit, etc.).	Some actions in the field of safety and health are planned based on a global evaluation of the company's activities.	A safety and health action plan (indicating timing, responsibilities and resources) based on a risk assessment is established.	A safety and health action plan (indicating timing, responsibilities and resources) based on an in-depth risk assessment is established and regularly reviewed and adapted.

D

C

B

A

Leadership				
Leadership	Nobody demonstrates leadership in prevention because it is assumed that all individuals know the importance of it by themselves.	The company's OSH expert demonstrates leadership in prevention. He/she embodies the policy by giving a good example.	The management shows leadership in prevention. This is clearly mentioned in the policy statement.	The management leads by example and demonstrates leadership in prevention.
Responsibility	Nobody in the organisation has explicit safety and health responsibilities.	The responsibility for safety and health is delegated to the company's OSH expert.	The company's OSH expert together with line management is responsible for the safety and health policy.	The line management is responsible for bringing the safety and health policy into practice.
Management	Health and safety issues are almost never discussed during management and/or board meetings and they are not criteria for management performance evaluation.	Health and safety issues are only discussed during management and/or board meetings after serious accidents and in that case they are criteria for management performance evaluation.	Health and safety issues are a standard item on the agenda of management and/or board meetings, including follow-up and communication. They constitute major criteria for management performance evaluation.	Health and safety issues are a standard item on the agenda of management and/or board meetings, including follow-up and communication. They constitute major criteria for management performance evaluation.



A B C D

Prevention tools				
Risk assessment	It takes a serious accident to start assessing the risks associated with the companies' activities.	The company's OSH expert has an accurate picture of the risk profile of the organisation.	Managers have an accurate picture of the risk profile of the organisation.	All safety and health risks are assessed, documented and regularly evaluated and reviewed. All workers are informed and instructed accordingly.
Workplace inspections	No workplace inspections are carried out because there are enough instructions and procedures to guarantee health and safety.	The company's OSH expert now and then performs workplace inspections to evaluate the health and safety situation on the shop floor.	The company's OSH expert regularly performs workplace inspections together with the line manager of that particular department/workplace.	Workplace inspections are performed regularly by the management and they take appropriate measures to tackle every non-conformity.
Procurement (services, suppliers, products)	Procurement takes into account several aspects such as price and efficiency. Health and safety criteria are not considered a specific aspect.	Procurement takes into account several aspects such as price and efficiency. Health and safety criteria are taken into consideration when procuring 'dangerous' machines.	When procuring equipment, goods and services, specific health and safety criteria are used and verified upon reception and before putting into service.	

A B C D

Information, training and consultation

Work introduction and instructions	New workers (including temps and apprentices) are directly put to work. They receive information and instructions when there is time available.	New workers (including temps and apprentices) are put to work after receiving written job instructions.	Before new workers (including temps and apprentices) are put to work, they receive all necessary information and instructions.	Before new workers (including temps and apprentices) are put to work, they receive all necessary information and it is checked that they understood them.
Training	The staff and management don't receive safety and health training. They learn by experience.	Workers receive specific job-related health and safety training.	Workers and management receive specific job-related health and safety training.	Each person in the company, from workers to management, receives all necessary safety and health training with regular updates.
Consultation	The company's OSH expert lays out the prevention policy and communicates it to the management.	The management lays out the prevention policy. The result is communicated to the workers.	The management lays out the prevention policy after consultation of the workers (representatives).	The management is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the workers (representatives) on all OSH-related issues.

Your score

Calculate your score by means of the scoreboard you find below.

Number of As =		× 1	=	
Number of Bs =		× 3	=	
Number of Cs =		× 5	=	
Number of Ds =		× 7	=	
TOTAL			=	

Your result

- 61 and more:** The OSH prevention policy in your company is situated at a fairly high level. Continue in this way.
- 37-60:** You certainly take care of prevention, but improvement is possible on several aspects.
- 12-36:** Prevention in your company is still in the cradle. Prepare yourself urgently to take more prevention measures.



Resources and further information

A dedicated section on the Healthy Workplaces Campaign website has been created to provide managers with further advice and guidance. It includes links to various publications and websites, as well as online and downloadable versions of this guide.

This information is available in 24 languages at:
<http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu>

You can find further information from the following organisations:

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

<http://osha.europa.eu>

- Worker representation and consultation on health and safety — an analysis of the findings of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)
- Management of occupational safety and health — an analysis of the findings of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)
- Psychosocial risk management — an analysis of the findings of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)
- Management of psychosocial risks in European enterprises: an exploration of drivers, barriers and needs on the basis of ESENER survey findings

<http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports>

BUSINESSEUROPE

<http://www.buinesseurope.eu>

International Labour Organization (ILO)

<http://www.ilo.org>

Occupational safety and health management systems, ILO Safework



About

The Healthy Workplaces Campaign is coordinated by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and its partners in more than 30 countries and supports a wide range of activities at the national and European level. The 2012–13 campaign on **‘Working together for risk prevention’** raises awareness of the importance of OSH leadership and worker participation for the prevention of work-related accidents and illnesses.

Key dates

- Campaign launch: 18 April 2012
- European Weeks for Safety and Health at Work in October 2012 and 2013
- Good Practice Awards Ceremony: April 2013
- Healthy Workplaces Summit: November 2013

<http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu>

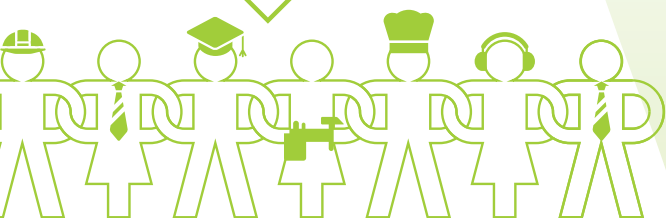
The **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)** contributes to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work. The agency researches, develops and distributes reliable, balanced, and impartial safety and health information and organises pan-European awareness-raising campaigns. Set up by the European Union in 1996 and based in Bilbao, Spain, the agency brings together representatives from the European Commission, Member State governments and employers’ and workers’ organisations, as well as leading experts in each of the EU-27 Member States and beyond.

BUSINESSEUROPE’s members are 41 central industrial and employers’ federations from 35 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe. BUSINESSEUROPE represents small, medium-sized and large companies.

BUSINESSEUROPE plays a crucial role in Europe as the main horizontal business organisation at EU level. Through its member federations, BUSINESSEUROPE represents 20 million companies. Its main task is to ensure that companies’ interests are represented and defended vis-à-vis the European institutions with the principal aim of preserving and strengthening corporate competitiveness. BUSINESSEUROPE is active in the European social dialogue to promote the smooth functioning of labour markets.

Management Leadership in Occupational Safety and Health – A Practical Guide

Safe and healthy workplaces help businesses and organisations to succeed and prosper, and also benefit wider society. This guide gives business leaders practical information on how safety and health can be improved through effective leadership, worker involvement and ongoing assessment and review, making businesses and organisations safe and healthy for everyone. A diagnostic check gives an idea of the level of prevention in a company and provides ideas for improvement.



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