

Week 1: The Legal Framework for OHS in Turkey

This week introduces the foundational laws and regulations that establish occupational health and safety in Turkey.

- **Core Principle:** Working in a safe environment is a basic human right. The legislation aims to regulate the relationship between employers and workers to ensure this.
- **The Turkish Constitution:** This is the highest law, providing two key articles:
 - **Article 50:** "No one can be employed in jobs that do not match their age, gender, and strength".
 - **Article 56:** "Everyone has the right to work in a healthy and balanced environment".
- **Occupational Health and Safety Law (No. 6331):**
 - This is the primary modern law, published in 2012.
 - **Scope:** It applies to **all jobs and workplaces** in both the public and private sectors, regardless of the number of workers.
 - **Exclusions:** The law does *not* apply to the Turkish Armed Forces, police, civil defense services, domestic services, self-employed individuals, or prisons.
- **Labor Law (No. 4857):**
 - This law defines general working conditions like employment contracts and wages.
 - It sets the **minimum working age at 15**.
 - **Important Note:** All OHS-related articles that were once in the Labor Law were **repealed** and moved into the new OHS Law (No. 6331).
- **Code of Obligations (No. 6098):**
 - This law establishes clear, mutual responsibilities.
 - **Employer's Duty:** To protect the health of workers, provide a safe working environment, and **compensate** workers for any damage or harm.
 - **Worker's Duty:** To comply with all safe working rules and regulations.
- **Social Security and General Health Insurance Law (No. 5510):**
 - This law is crucial as it defines "work accident" and "occupational disease" for the purpose of insurance and compensation.

- **Key Supporting Regulations:**

- **OHS Committees (2013):** It is **mandatory** to establish an OHS committee in workplaces with **50 or more employees** where work continues for more than six months. The committee must meet monthly.
- **Risk Assessment (2012):** Requires a team (employer, OHS specialist, physician, worker representatives) to conduct risk assessments.
- **Child and Young Workers:** Defines "child worker" (under 15) and "young worker" (under 18) and limits their working hours (e.g., max 35 hours/week for child workers).
- **Pregnant or Lactating Women (2013):**
 - Cannot work night shifts during pregnancy and for one year after birth.
 - Workday is limited to a **maximum of 7.5 hours**.
 - Receive 8 weeks of paid leave before and 8 weeks after delivery.
 - Receive 3 hours/day of breastfeeding leave until the baby is 6 months old, and 1.5 hours/day until the baby is 1 year old.
- **OHS Services (2014):** Employers must provide OHS services (physician, specialist). This can be an in-house "Workplace Health and Safety Unit" (İSGB) or an external "Joint Health and Safety Unit" (OSGB).
- **OHS Specialists (2015):** Defines three certification levels based on workplace hazard: **Class A** (very dangerous), **Class B** (dangerous), and **Class C** (less dangerous).

Week 2: National OHS Institutions and Organizations

This week identifies the key government bodies responsible for OHS.

- **Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MoLSS):** The main institution responsible for regulating and managing all aspects of working life.
- **General Directorate of OHS (İSGÜM):** A main service unit within the MoLSS. Its duties include:
 - Defining national OHS policies.
 - Preparing and implementing OHS legislation.

- Market surveillance and inspection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
 - **Labor Inspection Board:** An inspection unit under the MoLSS. It is responsible for planning and carrying out all workplace inspections.
 - **Social Security Institution (SSI):** A related institution of the MoLSS. It manages all social insurance, including payments and compensation for work accidents and occupational diseases.
 - **Ministry of Health:**
 - The main government body for all health services.
 - **Key Event (2005):** All hospitals belonging to the SSI, including the **3 specialized Occupational Diseases Hospitals**, were transferred to the Ministry of Health.
 - **Occupational Health and Safety Research and Development Institute (OHSRDI):**
 - An institute connected to the General Directorate of OHS.
 - Its main role is to provide laboratory support for inspections (e.g., measuring dust, noise) and to authorize private laboratories to do the same.
 - **Turkish Standards Institution (TSI):** An independent institution that sets national standards, including over 900 related to OHS (e.g., standards for machine safety, PPE, etc.).
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Week 3: Workplace Inspections and Enforcement

This week details how OHS laws are enforced.

- **Who Inspects:** Inspections are carried out by the **Labor Inspection Board**.
- **Types of Inspectors:** The board has two types of inspectors:
 1. **OHS Inspectors:** Graduates of engineering, medicine, etc., who focus on technical and health risks.
 2. **Administrative Inspectors:** Graduates of law, economics, etc., who focus on records, working hours, wages, child labor, and unionization.
- **Types of Inspections:**

1. **Scheduled Inspections:** Planned in advance, often targeting a specific high-risk sector (like construction or mining) or a specific region.
 2. **Non-scheduled Inspections:** Reactive inspections that are triggered by an event, such as a worker complaint, a news report, a serious work accident, or an occupational disease notification.
- **Stoppage of Work:**
 - This is the most powerful enforcement tool, based on Article 25 of the OHS Law.
 - Inspectors can stop work in the whole workplace or just a part of it if there is an "**imminent or life-threatening situation**".
 - During the stoppage, employees must be directed to other suitable jobs with no reduction in their wages.
 - **Other Inspecting Bodies:**
 - **Ministry of Environment:** Inspects workplaces for environmental harm, like waste output.
 - **Municipalities:** Inspect workplaces for harm to the *surrounding community*, such as from waste or noise.
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Week 4: OHS Services and the Role of the Physician

This week focuses on the preventive services required at the workplace.

- **Core Concept:** OHS services are defined as being "**essentially preventive**" in nature.
- **The Occupational Physician:** This role has three basic preventive duties :
 1. **Pre-Employment Examinations:** To determine if a person is physically and mentally suitable for a specific job *before* they start. For example, a person with hypertension or vertigo should not be approved for working at height.
 2. **Interval (Periodic) Medical Examinations:** To check if the employee is *still* suitable for the job and to detect any occupational diseases at an early stage.
 3. **Health Education:** To train employees about health-related risks.
- **The Occupational Safety Specialist:**

- Core duties include counseling, risk assessment, work environment surveillance, and training .
- They are also responsible for investigating work accidents and **near misses**.
- **Occupational Diseases Hospitals:**
 - These are specialized hospitals for the diagnosis and treatment of ODs.
 - There are **three** in Turkey: Zonguldak (1939), Ankara (1978), and İstanbul (1980).
 - As noted in Week 2, they are now all operated by the Ministry of Health.
- **Mandatory Health & Safety Training:**
 - **Frequency:** Training must be repeated at regular intervals.
 - Very Dangerous Class: At least **once a year**.
 - Dangerous Class: At least **once every two years**.
 - Less Dangerous Class: At least **once every three years**.
 - **Duration:**
 - Very Dangerous: Minimum **16 hours**.
 - Dangerous: Minimum **12 hours**.
 - Less Dangerous: Minimum **8 hours**.

Week 5: Occupational Diseases (OD)

This week defines occupational diseases and the process for diagnosing them.

- **Definition:** An occupational disease is a disease that occurs as a result of exposure to occupational risks (e.g., chemicals, dust, noise).
- **The Official Diagnostic Process:**
 1. A worker gets a health board report from an **authorized hospital** (an OD hospital, a state university hospital, or a state training/research hospital) .
 2. The **Social Security Institution (SSI) Health Board** reviews this report and the workplace's risk assessment to make the **final legal determination**.
- **Turkey's Occupational Diseases List:** The official list of compensable diseases is divided into 5 groups:

- **A:** Diseases from chemicals
- **B:** Occupational skin diseases
- **C:** Occupational lung diseases (Pneumoconiosis)
- **D:** Diseases from biological factors
- **E:** Diseases from physical factors (like noise or vibration)
- **The Problem in Turkey:** Occupational diseases are often **overlooked or misdiagnosed** as regular illnesses.
- **Why Detection is Critical:**
 - It proves that a health risk exists in the workplace, which forces the employer to take measures to protect *all other workers*.
 - If an OD is not detected, workers cannot receive compensation, and the hazardous conditions will continue to make other people sick.
- **Occupational vs. Work-Related Diseases:**
 - **Occupational Disease:** Has a strong, specific link to a *single* occupational factor (e.g., asbestos exposure causes asbestosis).
 - **Work-Related Disease:** A multifactorial disease where work is a *contributing* factor, but not the only cause (e.g., work stress contributing to heart disease; poor ergonomics contributing to back pain).

Week 6: Specific Occupational Diseases and Hazards

This week provides examples of common ODs, their causes, and their effects.

- **Notification Requirement:** When an OD is suspected, the employer must make an official notification to the SSI within **72 hours (3 working days)**.
- **1. Diseases from Dust (Pneumoconiosis):**
 - This is the general name for lung diseases caused by inhaling dust.
 - To be considered an OD, the worker must have been exposed for **at least 3 years**.
 - **Silicosis:** Caused by inhaling **silica** (quartz) dust. Common in mining, quarrying, and foundries. It is an irreversible lung disease.
 - **Asbestosis:** Caused by inhaling **asbestos** fibers. Common in insulation, building materials, and brake pad production.

- **Byssinosis:** Caused by inhaling **cotton, linen, or hemp** dust in the textile industry.
- **Siderosis:** Caused by **iron** dust.
- **Anthracosis:** Caused by **coal** dust.
- **2. Diseases from Heavy Metals:**
 - **Lead:** Affects the nervous system and blood. Chronic exposure leads to mild anemia, fatigue, headaches, and constipation.
 - **Cadmium:** Primarily damages the **kidneys**, and this damage is irreversible. It is also linked to lung and prostate cancer.
 - **Nickel:** Causes allergic skin diseases and respiratory irritation. It is a known carcinogen (nasal and laryngeal cancers).
- **3. Diseases from Solvents:**
 - **Routes of Entry:** 1. **Inhalation** (most important), 2. **Skin Absorption**, 3. **Swallowing**.
 - **Effects:** Long-term exposure damages the central nervous system (brain), liver, kidneys, and reproductive systems. **Benzene** is specifically linked to leukemia.
- **4. Diseases from Physical Factors:**
 - **Noise:** The harmful exposure limit is **85 dB**. It causes irreversible hearing loss (first at high frequencies, around 4000 Hz) as well as concentration loss and headaches.
 - **Working in Heat:** Can cause heat cramps, heat shock, and heatstroke.
 - **Working in Cold:** Can cause circulatory disorders and cold burns.
 - **Ergonomics (Working with Screened Tools):** Can cause muscle and joint ailments (from poor posture) and eye problems (burning, blurred vision).

Week 7: Work Accidents

This week defines work accidents and their context.

- **Definition of a Work Accident (from Social Security Law):** A work accident is an event that causes physical or mental disability and occurs in one of the following 5 situations:
 1. When the worker is **at the workplace**.

2. When the worker is doing their job (even if **outside the workplace**).
3. When the worker is **sent on duty** to another place by the employer.
4. During the time allocated for a lactating woman to **breastfeed** her child.
5. During the **commute (transportation)** in a vehicle provided by the employer.

- **Work Accident Pyramid (Accident Triangle):**

- This is a famous OHS model that shows the ratio of serious to minor incidents.
- The slide shows that for every **1 Fatal accident**, there are:
 - 1,391 accidents requiring > 3 days of rest
 - 1,272 accidents requiring < 3 days of rest
 - 5,125 accidents with no rest day
 - **>50,000 Near Misses** (the base of the pyramid)
- **The Key Lesson:** Near misses are a crucial warning sign. Investigating and preventing them is the best way to prevent the rare, fatal accidents at the top of the pyramid.