

## **UNIT 9**

### **HEALTH AT WORK**

# 1

## WORK AND HEALTH

Health is the level of functional or metabolic efficiency of a living organism. In humans, it is the general condition of a person's mind and body, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain (as in "good health" or "healthy").

**The World Health Organisation (WHO)** defined **health** in its broader sense in 1946 as "**a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of illness or infirmity**".

Factors that mainly affect upon health are: **genetic factors; age; lifestyle factors; hygiene habits and practices; labour, social and cultural environment ...**

Working environment includes **material, psychological and social aspects**, all related to the employee in the workplace.

**Health and Safety at Work** is a major issue for all businesses and it is vitally important that owners, managers and other employees of a business are fully aware of their responsibilities.

### REMEMBER

Good health and safety is good for business, it will almost always improve both employee morale and productivity. A healthier workforce really does make for a healthier business.

An employee will work better and more productively in a safe and healthy working environment and in an organisation where they are valued.

Health affects the person's physical activities and daily activities at work in two ways:

- + Positive (develops employees' skills and these help to do the job well)
- Negative (bad health drives down job quality and performance and are a burden on the economy).

Work affects the person's health in the following also:

- + Positive (promotes the integral development of the human person: physical, mental and social)
- Negative (hazards and harms).

Harm is a negative safety and health consequence:

- **injury**
- **pathologies (the symptoms of an illness)**
- **illnesses**

A hazard is anything that can cause harm; a source of danger.

Common workplace hazards are as follow:

**Biological agents**

(bacteria, fungi, viruses, internal parasites)

**Chemical agents**

(gases, fumes, dust, smoke, vapours, mist, fibers)

**Physical agents, including:**

- Noise
- Vibration
- Ionising Radiation
- Temperature
- Lighting

**Physical hazards or structural factors from:**

- Corridors, stairs, installations, plants
- Workplace transport
- Machinery
- Equipment
- Electricity

**Psychosocial factors and work organisation:**

- Work atmosphere
- Work organisation
- Personal leadership style
- Work conditions
- Responsibility

**EXAMPLE 1**

- Electric cabling is a **hazard**. If it has snagged on a sharp object, the exposed wiring is then considered to be **high risk** which can cause **harm**: electric contact.
- Stairs are a **hazard** because there is a possibility (**risk**) of falling down which causes **harm**: a wound

A risk is the chance, high or low, that any hazard will actually cause somebody harm.

## 2

## HAZARD AND RISK IN THE WORKPLACE

| HAZARD                   | RISK (CAUSE)          | HARM (CONSEQUENCE)                         |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Stairs                   | Falls to lower levels | Fracture                                   |
| Corridors                | Slips and trips       | Injuries and trauma<br>Sprains and strains |
| Electrical installations | Electrical contact    | Suffocation                                |

## EXERCISE 1



Fill in the following table with the data provided below:

Machinery, irritability, noise, deafness, workload, equipment, training, tuberculosis, tool, tachycardia, handling heavy loads, pressures, excessive workload, vibrations, depression, to become infected by a bacteria, difficult complex tasks, to become infected by a virus, sleepiness, lashes, bruises, to become infected by a fungus, fatigue, gas inhalation, dust inhalation, age, poor lighting, lack of experience, high temperature, aggressiveness, persistent forced postures, hepatitis, fumes inhalation, anxiety, long hours, nervousness, absence from work, neck pain, disability, timetable, genetic characteristics, loss of sight, entrapments, burns, impacts, scratches, low temperature.

| HAZARD                  | RISK (CAUSE) | HARM (CONSEQUENCE) |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Machinery               |              |                    |
| Equipment               |              |                    |
| Tool                    |              |                    |
| Workload                |              |                    |
| Training                |              |                    |
| Hands-on experience     |              |                    |
| Timetable               |              |                    |
| Age                     |              |                    |
| Genetic characteristics |              |                    |

# 3

## SPANISH LEGISLATION RELATED TO LABOUR RISK MANAGEMENT

Labour risk management includes all the measures throughout the whole chain of activities in a business to avoid or reduce hazards in the workplace.

It is the duty of every employer, so far as is reasonably practical, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all the employees of the business.

- The Spanish Constitution obliges public institutions to develop and promote a protective and safety policy in the workplace.
- The Workers' Statute mentions the right to work in safety.
- Collective agreements include guidelines on Health & Safety rights and duties.

The key piece of legislation relating to Health & Safety is the:

LABOUR RISK MANAGEMENT ACT,  
in Spanish: LEY DE PREVENCIÓN DE  
RIESGOS LABORALES (LPRL) 31/1995  
developed by the:

REGULATION OF RISK MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES RD 39/1997, January 17th.

The Act applies to specific target groups:

- ✓ Employed workers
- ✓ Civilian personnel in public institutions
- ✓ Self-employed workers
- ✓ Partners - workers in co-operatives companies

The Act does not apply to:

- ✗ The police, security and Customs Monitoring Service
- ✗ Civil defense in emergencies
- ✗ Armed Forces and Civil Guardians in military activities
- ✗ Domestic service.

# 4

## HARM IN THE WORKPLACE

### 4.1 WORK-RELATED ACCIDENT

An accident at work is considered to be a sudden event caused by an external reason, resulting in injury or death, which takes place in connection with work. This is also referred to as a "work-related accident".

This includes:

- Accidents in the course of work outside the premises of one's business, even if caused by a third party (on clients' premises, on another company's premises, in a public place or during transport, including road traffic accidents).
- Accidents on the way to or from work (commuting accidents), occurrences having only a medical origin (such as a heart attack at work).
- **Illnesses not considered occupational illnesses.**
- Rescue attempts related to work.

Those accidents committed by gross negligence or willful misconduct, or by fraud are not considered work-related (e.g. disobey orders or rules voluntarily and in a conscious manner).



## THE LEGAL PROCEDURE OF WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS

When a work-related accident happens there must be an **investigation** to determine the causes of it and take the necessary corrective measures to avoid the accident from happening again. It must also be **reported** to the Ministry of Employment and Social Security via Internet and the company must complete a **statistical analysis** of all accidents at the workplace.

## 4.2 OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS

Occupational illness is a work-related illness which could occur through a work activity **and classified according to cause in the Royal Decree 1299/2006.**

| OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESSES | GROUP | CAUSES   |
|------------------------|-------|--|
|                        | 1     | Chemical agents  |
|                        | 2     | Physical hazards   |
|                        | 3     | Biological agents  |
|                        | 4     | Breathing in hazardous materials and agents not included in other groups             |
|                        | 5     | Skin illnesses caused by hazardous materials and agents not included in other groups |
|                        | 6     | Carcinogens  |

#### **4.3 NON-SPECIFIC ILLNESSES AT WORK**

These are work-related illnesses but not considered occupational illnesses.

- Labour fatigue
- Burnout (occupational long lasting stress)
- Stress
- Labour dissatisfaction
- Mobbing syndrome (suffering degrading, inhumane treatment)
- Premature ageing

## **5**

### **RISK MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

| <b>BASIC RISK MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES</b> |   |
|---|---|
| <b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>                  | <b>USED TO AVOID OR REDUCE HARM</b>                   |
| 1. Safety at work                       | Work accidents  |
| 2. Industrial hygiene                   | Occupational illnesses                                |
| 3. Ergonomics                           | Fatigue   |
| 4. Psycho-sociology                     | Dissatisfaction                                       |
| 5. Social Policy                        | Legal requirements to avoid or reduce harm in general |
| 6. Occupational medicine                | For preventing and repairing                          |

## **6**

### **WORKERS' AND EMPLOYERS' RIGHTS AND DUTIES REGARDING LABOUR RISK MANAGEMENT**

All workers have a right to work in places where hazards to their health and safety are properly controlled.

Health and safety is to prevent the worker from getting hurt at work or falling ill through work.

The employer is responsible for health and safety, but the worker must also collaborate in order to ensure the health and safety guidelines are met.



- ✓ Follow the training you have received when using any work items your employer has given you.
- ✓ Take reasonable care of your own and other people's health and safety.
- ✓ Co-operate with your employer on health and safety.
- ✓ Tell someone (your employer, supervisor, or health and safety representative) if you think the workplace or inadequate precautions are putting anyone's health and safety at serious risk.



- ✓ Decide what could harm you in your job and the precautions to stop it. This is part of risk assessment.
- ✓ In a way you can understand, explain how risks will be controlled and tell the one who is responsible for this.
- ✓ Consult and work with your health and safety representatives in protecting everyone from harm in the workplace.
- ✓ Provide, free of charge, the health and safety training you need to do your job.
- ✓ Provide, free of charge, any equipment and protective clothing you need, and ensure it is properly looked after.
- ✓ Provide adequate first-aid facilities.
- ✓ An appropriate level of supervision, which is particularly vital for new, inexperienced and young workers, pregnant workers and temporary workers.
- ✓ Keep record of essential documents (Health and Safety risk management plan, risk assessment, medical check-ups, records of work accidents...).
- ✓ Conduct an investigation into any workplace accident and report all accidents by e-mail to the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. Statistical analysis must also be performed.

## LABOUR RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

Related to Health and Safety at work, the main agency in the **European Union is the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work.**

[www.osha.europa.eu/fop/spain/es/](http://www.osha.europa.eu/fop/spain/es/)

The main international agency is the **International Labour Organisation.**  
[www.ilo.org/global/lang--es](http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--es)

In Spain, the national agencies that ensure health and safety at work are:

- **The National Institute for Safety and Hygiene at Work:**

Its guiding mission is to analyse and search the work conditions, promoting and supporting good work conditions. It collaborates and transmits information to the European Union institutions, particularly with the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work.

- **The National Commission for Safety and Hygiene at Work** is an advisory body for health and safety at work.
- **Spanish Network of Health and Safety at Work** [www.insht.es](http://www.insht.es)
- **Occupational Health and Safety Foundation** [www.funprl.es](http://www.funprl.es)

Its aim is to promote good conditions related to health and safety at work, especially in small companies. It provides training, gives information and technical support, and promotes the fulfillment of the Labour Risk Management Act.