

Information sheet: Joint Occupational Safety and Health Objective 2013 – 2018 "Improvement in the organisation of company occupational safety and health"

Background

The world of work undergoes constant change. Only companies with healthy, efficient, qualified and motivated workers can successfully face up to the ever new challenges. The maintenance and improvement of healthy working conditions is therefore in the interests of the companies and the workers.

The basis for safe and healthy workplaces is a well-functioning, in-house occupational safety and health organisation. However, this is only effective if occupational safety and health is a self-evident element of company processes and decisions, i.e. safety and health are integrated into the company's organisational structures.

The advantages of a good occupational safety and health organisation in the form of, e.g. more safety and health for the workers and higher productivity as well as fewer production losses, can, however, only be achieved if occupational safety and health is understood as an integrated element of company processes and decisions and does not merely serve to discharge statutory obligations. Relevant examples, e.g. from the group of prize-winners of the German Occupational Safety and Health Prize in which occupational safety and health is defined as an equivalent corporate objective alongside good economic business results, show the effect of such a strategy.

The key role of the occupational safety and health organisation can also be highlighted with accident statistics. In companies with a suitable occupational health and safety management system (OH&S-MS), the accident risk is considerably lower than in comparable companies without a OH&S-MS. In these latter companies, accidents are frequently attributable to systematic shortcomings in the occupational safety and health organisation.

One essential element of a good occupational safety and health organisation is the risk assessment which has to be performed by companies. The company's obligation to perform the risk assessment and other regulations and framework conditions relating to the company occupational safety and health organisation are stipulated in particular in the Occupational Safety and Health Act (ArbSchG) and in the Occupational Safety Act (ASiG).

In spite of the clear statutory obligation (Section 5 ArbSchG), the risk assessment is not yet performed throughout the country and to the necessary extent, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises.

For example, in a representative survey¹ of small and medium-sized enterprises conducted on behalf of the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) in 2010, only just under 40% of those surveyed stated they had a risk assessment.

The representative company survey² conducted by TNS-Infratest as part of the evaluation of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA) in 2011 produced comparable results. According to this survey, 52% of all companies surveyed conduct a risk assessment. Related to the size of the company, this produces the following distribution: of the micro-enterprises, 42% conduct a risk assessment, in companies with a workforce of 10 to 49 the figure is around 70%, in companies with 50 to 249 workers 90% and in other major companies surveyed with more than 250 workers that figure is 98%.

¹ "Kenntnisstand von Unternehmen auf dem Gebiet des Arbeits- und Gesundheitsschutzes in KMU"; Cordula Sczesny, Sophie Keindorf, Patrick Droß; BAuA 2011

² Company and worker survey as part of the GDA umbrella evaluation, results not yet published, contracting authority: General Office of the National Occupational Safety and Health Conference (NAK) at the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA)
Stand: März 2012

Activities of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA)

To improve the organisation of company occupational safety and health, the GDA bodies will be concentrating their activities on two fields of action in the period from 2013 to 2018.

On the one hand, the aim is to integrate safety and health into company processes and decision-making areas. On the other, the implementation of the risk assessment is to be improved.

For implementation purposes, a mixture of information and motivation offerings as well as consultancy and supervising activities will be used. The guiding principle for these activities is to examine individual company circumstances and reach as many companies as possible. The social partners and as many cooperation partners as possible, such as trade associations, e.g. Fachvereinigung Arbeitssicherheit (FASI – Association of occupational safety experts), Verband der Betriebs- und Werksärzte (VDBW – Association of German business and company doctors), health insurance funds as well as other organisations in the field of safety and health at work are also to be actively included in the implementation of these measures.

The heart of the GDA activities will be a company check for the self-evaluation of the organisation of the company occupational safety and health – "ORGCheck". With this ORGCheck, the companies obtain the possibility of rating themselves (e.g. within the branch of industry) (benchmark).

Furthermore, the ORGCheck forms the basis for the supervisory activities of the federal states and public accident insurance institutions. In this connection, the GDA bodies want to strive for increased use of the order-pacing companies' relationships between major industry and suppliers, contractors and small and medium-sized enterprises.