



FACTS ON *SafeWork*

Each year, two million women and men die as a result of occupational accidents and work-related diseases. Across the globe, there are some 270 million occupational accidents and 160 million occupational diseases each year. The ILO estimates that four per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is lost due to accidents and work-related diseases.

The ILO has never accepted the proposition that injury and disease “go with the job”. In the face of globalization, the new challenge is to ensure that increasing numbers of working people enjoy a safe and healthy working environment. That is why the organization has adopted April 28 – a day the world's trade union movement has associated with commemorating victims of occupational death, injury and disease – as World Day for Safety and Health at Work, focusing on the promotion of a safety and health culture at workplaces throughout the world.

Experience has shown that a strong safety culture is beneficial for workers, employers and governments alike. Various prevention techniques have proven themselves as effective in both avoiding workplace accidents and improving business performance. Today's high safety standards in some countries are a direct result of long-term policies encouraging tripartite social dialogue, collective bargaining between trade unions and employers, as well as effective health and safety legislation backed by potent labour inspection.

In developing countries, most work-related accidents and illnesses occur in primary industries such as farming, fishing and logging, mining and construction. Low literacy and poor training regarding safety methods lead to high death rates from fires and exposure to hazardous substances, affecting, among others, those in the informal economy.

Key Statistics

- Each day, an average of 5,000 people die as a result of work-related accidents or diseases.
- Workers suffer approximately 270 million occupational accidents each year (fatal and non-fatal), and there are some 160 million incidents of occupational diseases. In one third of these cases, the illness causes the loss of four or more working days.
- There are some 355,000 on-the-job fatalities each year. It is estimated that half of them occur in agriculture, the sector with half the world's workforce. Other high risk sectors are mining, construction and commercial fishing.
- Four per cent of the world's gross domestic product (US\$ 1,251,353 million) is lost with the cost of injury, death and disease through absence from work, sickness treatment, disability and survivor benefits.
- The loss in GDP resulting from the cost of death and illness in the workforce is 20 times greater than all official development assistance to developing countries.
- Each year, 12,000 children are killed on the job.
- Hazardous substances kill 340,000 workers annually. Asbestos alone claims about 100,000 lives.
- An estimated 11 million workers worldwide are monitored for exposure to ionizing radiation.
- In some types of jobs, as many as 5,000 injuries requiring first aid treatment take place for each fatality.
- Taken together, heart diseases and musculo-skeletal diseases account for more than half of the costs attributable to work-related diseases.
- Cancer is the biggest cause of work-related death, responsible for 32% of such fatalities.
- Accidents and violence cause as many work-related deaths as communicable diseases.
- Studies suggest that between 50% and 60% of all lost working days in Europe are related to stress at work.
- The majority of the 100 million enterprises of the world are small ones. More than one billion workers, out of the total 3 billion in the world, are self-employed in agriculture or work in small facilities.

Establishing and Implementing a Safety and Health Culture at the Workplace

A workplace safety culture comprises all the values, attitudes, rules, managerial systems and practices, participatory principles and working behaviour conducive to creating a safe and healthy working environment – a place where people can produce with a high degree of quality and productivity. The ILO's Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) provides a suitable framework supporting a safety and health culture at work.

Effective prevention of occupational accidents and diseases begins at the enterprise level but involves broad participation from governments, workers' and employers' organizations. Worker participation, implementation of work organisation procedures, the provision of training and information to workers and inspection activities are important tools to promote a safety and health culture. Enterprise management and commitment plays a key role, as evidenced by the fact that companies with occupational safety and health and management systems (OSH-MS) have better records both in safety and productivity than those that do not have such systems. Meanwhile, government labour inspectors have a pivotal role in promoting, informing about, monitoring as well as ensuring compliance with core ILO Labour Standards on the basis of flagship ILO SafeWork conventions. Almost 130 member states have ratified the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), making it one of the most ratified instruments of the organization and a "door-opener" for technical cooperation and promoting a safety and health culture.

The new ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001) provide a unique and powerful tool for developing a sustainable safety and health culture at the enterprise level and mechanisms for the continual improvement of working conditions and the environment. For its part, the ILO is undertaking a major effort to improve the implementation of safety and health standards through the development of an integrated approach that streamlines all its means of action, including standard-setting, codes and guidelines, technical cooperation, international cooperation, statistical analysis and information dissemination, so as to achieve more effective occupational safety and health implementation by member states.

The Role of the ILO

The International Labour Organization was founded to ensure for everyone the right to earn a living in freedom, dignity and security – which includes the right to decent and safe working conditions. In the course of this century, industrialized countries have seen a clear decrease in serious injuries, not least because of real advances in making the workplace healthier and safer. The challenge is to extend the benefits of this experience to the whole working world.

The ILO's SafeWork programme responds to this challenge. Its primary objectives are to create worldwide awareness of the dimensions and consequences of work-related accidents, injuries and diseases; to promote the goal of basic protection for all workers in conformity with international labour standards; to enhance the capacity of member states and industries; and to design and implement effective preventive and protective policies and programmes.

Within this context, the ILO recognizes the need to strengthen the technical and policy-related capacities of government institutions and employers' and workers' organizations to enable them to deal directly and effectively with occupational safety and health issues. This is done through the provision of practical guidance and technical advisory services, awareness raising and training activities, such as the SOLVE training programme addressing psychosocial issues at work, as well as addressing occupational health, including respiratory diseases, radiation and the hazards associated with shipbreaking. The ILO's International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre also plays an important role, together with national counterparts in more than 100 countries. In all these matters, a high priority should be given to supporting employers' and workers' cooperation in implementing safety and health programmes.

For more information: www.ilo.org

ILO Standards

There are more than 70 ILO **Conventions** and **Recommendations** related to questions of safety and health. Many others deal with matters that are also clearly relevant to the safety and health agenda – for example, labour inspection, freedom of association, collective bargaining, gender equality and child labour. In addition, the ILO has issued more than 30 **Codes of Practice on Occupational Health and Safety**. More information can be obtained from the SafeWork website at www.ilo.org/safework.

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