

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES IN SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES –A STUDY

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Abstract

Occupational safety and health is the concept with the principle aim of protecting the employee of any industry from harm when in the line of duty. Its objective is to curtail work related injuries, sickness and deaths by proposing standards that seek to enforce workplace safety and health. Occupational health and safety is a multi-disciplinary area concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment. The aim of all occupational health and safety programs is to provide a safe work environment. On the other hand, it may also protect co-workers, family members, employers, customers, supplies, nearby communities, and other members of the public who are impacted by the workplace environment. It may involve interactions among many subject areas, including occupational medicine, occupational or industrial hygiene, public health, safety engineering chemistry, health physics etc.

*The definition of occupational health was adopted jointly by the international labour organization (ILO) and the WHO at its first session in 1950 and revised at its twelfth session in 1995. The definition reads;”occupational health should aim at: the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; the prevention amongst workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions; the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health , the placing and maintenance of the workers in an occupational environment adapted to his physiological and psychological capabilities and to summarize, the adaptation of work to man to his job”. In other words, occupational health and safety encompasses the **social, mental and physical well-being of workers.***

Introduction

National Government should develop the requisite legal administrative and financial mechanisms to provide all workplaces with occupational safety and health services that will effectively identify prevent and control exposures to potential hazards and promote the enhancement and maintenance of optimal levels.

More recently, enhancing small scale industries has been viewed as an effective way of fostering the private sectors contribution to both the growth of the equity objectives of development small scale industries play a key role in the industrialisation of developing country. This is because they provide immediate large-scale employment and have a comparatively higher –labour capital ratio, they need lower investments, offer a method of ensuring a more equitable distribution of national income and facilitate an effective mobilisation of sources of capital and skill which might otherwise remain unutilised and they stimulate the growth of industrial entrepreneurship and ownership and location.

Importance of Occupational Safety and Health

Work plays a major role in people's lives since most workers spend at least eight hours a day in the workplace such as plantation, office, factory, hospital, etc. It is also observed that healthy workers are found to increase industrial output which in turn lowers the cost of production. The health and safety of workers are thus prerequisites for improvements in quality and productivity and are important for equitable and sustainable socio-economic development. But this is not the case for many workers. Everyday workers are faced with a multitude of health hazards, such as dusts, gases, noise, vibration, extreme temperatures etc.

Unfortunately some employers assume little responsibilities for the protection of workers health and safety. In fact, some employers do not even know that they have the moral and often legal responsibility to protect workers. As a result of the hazards and a lack of attention given to health and safety, work-related accidents and diseases are common in all parts of the world.

Occupational Hazards

Every occupation is associated with certain risk because of which the persons can get certain diseases or injuries etc. This can happen suddenly or may take some years. In simple words "occupational Hazards" means damage to health or injuries at work place. Following two are the examples how Occupational Hazard can happen suddenly and slowly:

- a) A factor worker while working on some machine gets serious injury to his hand or worker working at a height falls down and gets head injury. Such "Occupational Hazards" happen suddenly.
- b) A person getting exposed to radioactive material at work place, eg: X-ray technician, may develop hazards related to radiation exposure (like cancer) after many years. Such "Occupational Hazard" happen slowly.

Types of Occupational Hazards:

There are unlimited numbers of hazards that can be found in almost any workplace. There are certain obvious unsafe working conditions, such as unguarded machinery, slippery floors or inadequate fire precautions, but there are also a number of categories of insidious hazards including:

- Chemical hazards, arising from liquid, solids, dusts, fumes, vapours and gases.
- Physical hazards, such as noise, vibration, unsatisfactory lighting, radiation and extreme temperatures.
- Biological hazards, such as bacteria, viruses, infectious waste and infestations.
- Psychological hazards resulting from stress and strain.

- Hazards associated with the non application of ergonomic principles, for examples badly designed machinery, mechanical devices and tools used by workers, improper seating or poorly designed work practices.

• Risk Assessment

Risk management is an integral part of performing Occupational health and safety. Many workplaces have hazards. Put employees at risk of injury or harm to health. Therefore health and safety need to be managed in a systematic manner. Occupational health and safety already is a legal requirement in most of the countries including India.

The risk assessment is carried out where potential risk is associated with hazardous installation as the risk has potential effect on employees, local population the environment or on the ecology. The Occupational health and the safety management system makes use of risk management to assess the risk associated with hazards. The assessment process can be summarized as-

1. Identifying hazards
2. Assessing associated risk
3. Taking action to mitigate risk
4. Monitoring the effectiveness

Conclusion

In every Occupation workers usually face number of hazards in the workplace. So, Occupational health and safety is integral to the success of any development. It addresses the broad range of workplace hazards from accident prevention to the more insidious hazards including toxic fumes, dust, noise, heat, stress, etc. The most effective accident and disease prevention begins when work processes are still in the design stage when safe conditions can be taken into consideration, rather than attempting to solve problems after they have already developed. In order to develop a successful health and safety programme. It is necessary that a constant medical supervision is necessary as the health of employees as well as employers is always on the surveillance. This will help in early detection especially in cases when illness is beyond treatment and irreversible.

Thus it can be concluded that Occupational safety and health is a major area of concern as it is an essential part of risk management and its failure may led to catastrophic results. Therefore, the aim of Occupational safety and health should be to achieve healthy and safe working environment as healthy workers will be better motivated which will contribute better-quality product and services and in turn will enhance the overall quality of life of individuals and society.

Reference

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