

SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Patrick van Loenhout, Ton Vermeulen and Purdey van Wissen

Attention to safety and health (S&H) in the workplace has grown in recent years, spurred partly by (European) legislation and Safety and Health Covenants. Many companies cover S&H explicitly in their policies, communications and training, and use a variety of instruments and methods to this end. Company experience demonstrates that improving workplace safety and employee health results in an increase of labour productivity and a reduction of absenteeism among employees.

In the Netherlands every week at average two persons die by a workplace accident. Every worker has an average chance of 41% to get a workplace accident during his working lifetime.

The Ministry of Social Affairs started in 2003 a programme “Reinforcing safety in the workplace”. One of the goals of the project is reinforcing the safety culture.

In the publication “Safety in mind” the results are given of ways to improve the safety culture in companies. Two types of interventions are given.

1. Intervention with active involvement of workers, such as workshops and advisory board groups, observation and feedback;
2. Communication with the workers in Training, Campaigns and information, Digital tools.

A new Programme for Improving Occupational Safety was launched in 2003. The aim of this five-year programme (2003-2007) is to reduce the number of occupational accidents. The first part of the programme focuses on **improving safety awareness among employers and employees** by reinforcing the safety culture within companies. Safety improvement projects will be carried out in twenty participating sectors and target groups. In the second part of the programme a quantitative occupational risk model is being developed to **help companies in assessing their risks**.

The **safety improvement projects** in companies are carried out in cooperation with employers and employees with the aim of raising awareness and reinforcing the safety culture. This can also lead to changes in the company’s organisational set-up. Twenty safety improvement projects have been started. Each safety improvement project begins with an assessment of work-related accidents in the sector in question, and of the underlying causes. After the assessment phase, a actual action plan is developed. In consultation with the sector the key matters are identified which require action in order to improve safety and reduce the number of accidents (or the seriousness of accidents). The aim of the project is to develop good practices that will serve as an example to other companies.

In the presentation backgrounds and first results of the projects will be presented.