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H & S Guidance - Occupational Health

INTRODUCTION

Every year more than two million people suffer ill-health caused or made worse by work, with the loss of 13 million working days. Work-related illness can occur in any business and costs British industry several hundred million pounds every year. Preventing ill health caused by work will therefore serve to protect your staff and your profits.

WHAT IS WORK-RELATED ILLNESS?

Work-related illness, also known as occupational ill health, describes any illness an employee suffers because of the hazards they have been exposed to at work. There are a wide range of health risks capable of causing a variety of illness. Examples of such risks include:

HEALTH RISK	ILL-HEALTH EFFECTS	MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH THESE <u>INDICATIVE ONLY</u> LOCAL AUTHORITY ENFORCED ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• handling heavy or awkward loads• Poor work postures• Repetitive or forceful movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Musculoskeletal disorders e.g. bad backs, upper limb disorders, 'RSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Warehousing/retail distribution• Offices• Anywhere where loads are moved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breathing in and handling hazardous substances e.g. asbestos, solvents, wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cancer• Asthma• Dermatitis• Bronchitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dermatitis:• Hairdressing/beauty care• Cleaning• Catering• Asbestos• motor vehicle repair• repair and maintenance of older



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dust.		work premises
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High noise levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deafness• Tinnitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Woodworking machines in DIY/builders merchants• Anywhere using power tools (include. pneumatic tools)• Entertainment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vibration e.g. from hand-held tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vibration white finger (VWF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agricultural/horticultural amenity work• Hand held grinders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Radiation e.g. UV radiation from prolonged outdoor work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Burns• Skin complaints• Cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agricultural/horticultural amenity work• UV tanning saloons• Catering (microwave ovens)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biological agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mild sickness to serious diseases e.g. Hepatitis B, Legionnaires disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skin piercing• Cleaning• Agricultural/horticultural amenity work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High blood pressure• Heart disease• Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any

TAKING ACTION

Preventing ill-health requires sound management, summed up in the following 4 stages:

(i) **Find out** if you have a problem



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- Talk to employees, look at sickness absence records etc.
- Get information/advice from suppliers.

(ii) **Decide what action to take**

- Assess the risks
- Evaluate existing precautions
- Identify control measures needed
- Prioritise your action

(iii) **Take action** - implement identified improvements

(iv) **Check/review** what you have done

In this way you can anticipate problems rather than deal with them after they have arisen.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- Booklet HS(G)137 'Health Risk Management - A practical guide for managers in small and medium-sized enterprises' should be of great help in managing work-related health risks. It provides more detailed advice and practical guidance on the four stages of the process of health risk management outlined above, supported by several checklists.
- Advice can be sought from the local authority Environmental Health department, the HSE area office, HSE's Infoline (08701 545500). Trade associations, employers' associations or trade unions may also be of use.
- The Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) is a team of doctors and nurses who can advise on work-related health problems.

You may also wish to seek specialist advice from the following:

- Engineers (ventilation, noise, water treatment)
- Occupational hygienists
- Occupational health doctors and nurses
- Ergonomists



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- Microbiologists

Each of these groups has its own professional body who may be able to advise on selection and appropriate qualifications. There is also a free leaflet available, 'Selecting a Health and Safety Consultancy'.

CHECKLIST - OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

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| 1 Have you identified all occupational health hazards in your workplace? | Yes | No |
| 2 Have you carried out risk assessments covering all work procedures where there may be a health risk, identifying whom might be harmed and how big the risks are? | Yes | No |
| 3 Have you used the risk assessments to help decide what action you need to take? | Yes | No |
| 4 Do you monitor and review the measures in place to control health risks? | Yes | No |
| 5 Do you inform, instruct and train employees in relation to work-related health risks? | Yes | No |

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

(NB References for specific health risks are contained in individual elements of this manual.)

1. Booklet HS(G)137 'Health Risk Management - A practical guide for managers in small and medium-sized enterprises'. HSE ISBN 0-7176-0905-7.
2. Booklet HS(G)65 - Successful health and safety management (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 1276 7.
3. Leaflet IND(G)275-Managing health and safety-5 Steps to success (HSE). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg275.pdf
4. Booklet HS(G)167 - Biological monitoring in the workplace (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 1279 1.
5. Leaflet IND(G)245 - Biological monitoring in the workplace - Information for employees (HSE)

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg245.htm>



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6. Booklet HSG 61 Health surveillance at work. (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 1705 X.

7. Leaflet INDG 281. Help on work related stress. A short guide. (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 2112 X

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg281.pdf

8. Leaflet INDG 63, Passive smoking at work

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg63.pdf>

9. Leaflet INDG 304, Understanding health surveillance at work

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg304.pdf>