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R164 - Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)

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Preamble

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,

Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Sixty-seventh Session on 3 June 1981, and

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to safety and health and the working environment, which is the sixth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of a Recommendation supplementing the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981,

adopts this twenty-second day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and eighty-one, the following Recommendation, which may be cited as the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981:

I. Scope and Definitions

1.

(1) To the greatest extent possible, the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981, hereinafter referred to as the Convention, and of this Recommendation should be applied to all branches of economic activity and to all categories of workers.

(2) Provision should be made for such measures as may be necessary and practicable to give self-employed persons protection analogous to that provided for in the Convention and in this Recommendation.

2. For the purpose of this Recommendation -

(a) the term **branches of economic activity** covers all branches in which workers are employed, including the public service;

(b) the term **workers** covers all employed persons, including public employees;

(c) the term **workplace** covers all places where workers need to be or to go by reason of their work and which are under the direct or indirect control of the employer;

(d) the term **regulations** covers all provisions given force of law by the competent authority or authorities;

(e) the term **health**, in relation to work, indicates not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; it also includes the physical and mental elements affecting health which are directly related to safety and hygiene at work.

II. Technical Fields of Action

3. As appropriate for different branches of economic activity and different types of work and taking into account the principle of giving priority to eliminating hazards at their source, measures should be taken in pursuance of the policy referred to in Article 4 of the Convention, in particular in the following fields:

- (a) design, siting, structural features, installation, maintenance, repair and alteration of workplaces and means of access thereto and egress therefrom;
- (b) lighting, ventilation, order and cleanliness of workplaces;
- (c) temperature, humidity and movement of air in the workplace;
- (d) design, construction, use, maintenance, testing and inspection of machinery and equipment liable to present hazards and, as appropriate, their approval and transfer;
- (e) prevention of harmful physical or mental stress due to conditions of work;
- (f) handling, stacking and storage of loads and materials, manually or mechanically;
- (g) use of electricity;
- (h) manufacture, packing, labelling, transport, storage and use of dangerous substances and agents, disposal of their wastes and residues, and, as appropriate, their replacement by other substances or agents which are not dangerous or which are less dangerous;
- (i) radiation protection;
- (j) prevention and control of, and protection against, occupational hazards due to noise and vibration;
- (k) control of the atmosphere and other ambient factors of workplaces;
- (l) prevention and control of hazards due to high and low barometric pressures;
- (m) prevention of fires and explosions and measures to be taken in case of fire or explosion;
- (n) design, manufacture, supply, use, maintenance and testing of personal protective equipment and protective clothing;
- (o) sanitary installations, washing facilities, facilities for changing and storing clothes, supply of drinking water, and any other welfare facilities connected with occupational safety and health;
- (p) first-aid treatment;
- (q) establishment of emergency plans;
- (r) supervision of the health of workers.

III. Action at the National Level

4. With a view to giving effect to the policy referred to in Article 4 of the Convention, and taking account of the technical fields of action listed in Paragraph 3 of this Recommendation, the competent authority or authorities in each country should--

- (a) issue or approve regulations, codes of practice or other suitable provisions on occupational safety and health and the working environment, account being taken of the links existing between safety and health, on the one hand, and hours of work and rest breaks, on the other;
- (b) from time to time review legislative enactments concerning occupational safety and health and the working environment, and provisions issued or approved in pursuance of clause (a) of this Paragraph, in the light of experience and advances in science and technology;
- (c) undertake or promote studies and research to identify hazards and find means of overcoming them;
- (d) provide information and advice, in an appropriate manner, to employers and workers and promote or facilitate co-operation between them and their organisations, with a view to eliminating hazards or reducing them as far as practicable; where appropriate, a special training programme for migrant workers in their mother tongue should be provided;
- (e) provide specific measures to prevent catastrophes, and to co-ordinate and make coherent the actions to be taken at different levels, particularly in industrial zones where undertakings with high potential risks for workers and the surrounding population

are situated;

(f) secure good liaison with the International Labour Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Alert System set up within the framework of the International Labour Organisation;

(g) provide appropriate measures for handicapped workers.

5. The system of inspection provided for in paragraph 1 of Article 9 of the Convention should be guided by the provisions of the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947, and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969, without prejudice to the obligations thereunder of Members which have ratified these instruments.

6. As appropriate, the competent authority or authorities should, in consultation with the representative organisations of employers and workers concerned, promote measures in the field of conditions of work consistent with the policy referred to in Article 4 of the Convention.

7. The main purposes of the arrangements referred to in Article 15 of the Convention should be to--

(a) implement the requirements of Articles 4 and 7 of the Convention;

(b) co-ordinate the exercise of the functions assigned to the competent authority or authorities in pursuance of Article 11 of the Convention and Paragraph 4 of this Recommendation;

(c) co-ordinate activities in the field of occupational safety and health and the working environment which are exercised nationally, regionally or locally, by public authorities, by employers and their organisations, by workers' organisations and representatives, and by other persons or bodies concerned;

(d) promote exchanges of views, information and experience at the national level, at the level of an industry or that of a branch of economic activity.

8. There should be close co-operation between public authorities and representative employers' and workers' organisations, as well as other bodies concerned in measures for the formulation and application of the policy referred to in Article 4 of the Convention.

9. The review referred to in Article 7 of the Convention should cover in particular the situation of the most vulnerable workers, for example, the handicapped.

IV. Action at the Level of the Undertaking

10. The obligations placed upon employers with a view to achieving the objective set forth in Article 16 of the Convention might include, as appropriate for different branches of economic activity and different types of work, the following:

(a) to provide and maintain workplaces, machinery and equipment, and use work methods, which are as safe and without risk to health as is reasonably practicable;

(b) to give necessary instructions and training, taking account of the functions and capacities of different categories of workers;

(c) to provide adequate supervision of work, of work practices and of application and use of occupational safety and health measures;

(d) to institute organisational arrangements regarding occupational safety and health and the working environment adapted to the size of the undertaking and the nature of its activities;

(e) to provide, without any cost to the worker, adequate personal protective clothing and equipment which are reasonably necessary when hazards cannot be otherwise prevented or controlled;

(f) to ensure that work organisation, particularly with respect to hours of work and rest breaks, does not adversely affect occupational safety and health;

(g) to take all reasonably practicable measures with a view to eliminating excessive physical and mental fatigue;

(h) to undertake studies and research or otherwise keep abreast of the scientific and technical knowledge necessary to comply with the foregoing clauses.

11. Whenever two or more undertakings engage in activities simultaneously at one workplace, they should collaborate in applying the provisions regarding occupational safety and health and the working environment, without prejudice to the responsibility of

each undertaking for the health and safety of its employees. In appropriate cases, the competent authority or authorities should prescribe general procedures for this collaboration.

12.

(1) The measures taken to facilitate the co-operation referred to in Article 20 of the Convention should include, where appropriate and necessary, the appointment, in accordance with national practice, of workers' safety delegates, of workers' safety and health committees, and/or of joint safety and health committees; in joint safety and health committees workers should have at least equal representation with employers' representatives.

(2) Workers' safety delegates, workers' safety and health committees, and joint safety and health committees or, as appropriate, other workers' representatives should--

(a) be given adequate information on safety and health matters, enabled to examine factors affecting safety and health, and encouraged to propose measures on the subject;

(b) be consulted when major new safety and health measures are envisaged and before they are carried out, and seek to obtain the support of the workers for such measures;

(c) be consulted in planning alterations of work processes, work content or organisation of work, which may have safety or health implications for the workers;

(d) be given protection from dismissal and other measures prejudicial to them while exercising their functions in the field of occupational safety and health as workers' representatives or as members of safety and health committees;

(e) be able to contribute to the decision-making process at the level of the undertaking regarding matters of safety and health;

(f) have access to all parts of the workplace and be able to communicate with the workers on safety and health matters during working hours at the workplace;

(g) be free to contact labour inspectors;

(h) be able to contribute to negotiations in the undertaking on occupational safety and health matters;

(i) have reasonable time during paid working hours to exercise their safety and health functions and to receive training related to these functions;

(j) have recourse to specialists to advise on particular safety and health problems.

13. As necessary in regard to the activities of the undertaking and practicable in regard to size, provision should be made for--

(a) the availability of an occupational health service and a safety service, within the undertaking, jointly with other undertakings, or under arrangements with an outside body;

(b) recourse to specialists to advise on particular occupational safety or health problems or supervise the application of measures to meet them.

14. Employers should, where the nature of the operations in their undertakings warrants it, be required to set out in writing their policy and arrangements in the field of occupational safety and health, and the various responsibilities exercised under these arrangements, and to bring this information to the notice of every worker, in a language or medium the worker readily understands.

15.

(1) Employers should be required to verify the implementation of applicable standards on occupational safety and health regularly, for instance by environmental monitoring, and to undertake systematic safety audits from time to time.

(2) Employers should be required to keep such records relevant to occupational safety and health and the working environment as are considered necessary by the competent authority or authorities; these might include records of all notifiable occupational accidents and injuries to health which arise in the course of or in connection with work, records of authorisation and exemptions under laws or regulations to supervision of the health of workers in the undertaking, and data concerning exposure to specified substances and agents.

16. The arrangements provided for in Article 19 of the Convention should aim at ensuring that workers--

- (a) take reasonable care for their own safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work;
- (b) comply with instructions given for their own safety and health and those of others and with safety and health procedures;
- (c) use safety devices and protective equipment correctly and do not render them inoperative;
- (d) report forthwith to their immediate supervisor any situation which they have reason to believe could present a hazard and which they cannot themselves correct;
- (e) report any accident or injury to health which arises in the course of or in connection with work.

17. No measures prejudicial to a worker should be taken by reference to the fact that, in good faith, he complained of what he considered to be a breach of statutory requirements or a serious inadequacy in the measures taken by the employer in respect of occupational safety and health and the working environment.

V. Relations to Existing International Labour Conventions and Recommendations

18. This Recommendation does not revise any international labour Recommendation.

19.

(1) In the development and application of the policy referred to in Article 4 of the Convention and without prejudice to their obligations under Conventions they have ratified, Members should refer to the international labour Conventions and Recommendations listed in the Appendix.

(2) The Appendix may be modified by the International Labour Conference, by a two-thirds majority, in connection with the future adoption or revision of any Convention or Recommendation in the field of safety and health and the working environment.

ANNEX

LIST OF INSTRUMENTS CONCERNING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH AND THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE SINCE 1919

Year	Convention	Recommendation
1921	13. White Lead (Painting)	
1929	27. Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels)	
1937	62. Safety Provisions (Building)	53. Safety Provisions (Building)
1946	73. Medical Examinations (Seafarers) 77. Medical Examination Of Young Persons (Industry) 78. Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-industrial Occupations)	79. Medical Examination of Young Persons
1947	81. Labour Inspection	81. Labour Inspection 82. Labour Inspection (Mining and Transport)
1949	92. Accommodation of Crews (Revised)	
1953		97. Protection of Workers' Health
1958		105. Ships' Medicine Chests 106. Medical Advice at Sea
1959	113. Medical Examination (Fishermen)	112. Occupational Health Services

1960	115. Radiation Protection	114. Radiation Protection
1963	119. Guarding of Machinery	118. Guarding of Machinery
1964	Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) 121. Employment Injury Benefits	120. Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) 121. Employment Injury Benefits
1965	124. Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work)	
1967	127. Maximum Weight	128. Maximum Weight
1969	129. Labour Inspection (Agriculture)	133. Labour Inspection (Agriculture)
1970	133. Accommodation of Crews (Supplementary Provisions) 134. Prevention of Accidents (Seafarers)	140. Crew Accommodation (Air Conditioning) 141. Crew Accommodation (Noise Control) 142. Prevention of Accidents (Seafarers)
1971	136. Benzene	144. Benzene
1974	139. Occupational Cancer	147. Occupational Cancer
1977	148. Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration)	156. Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration)
1979	152. Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work)	160. Occupational Safety and Health (Dock Work)

See related

Key Information

Recommendation concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment

Adoption: Geneva, 67th ILC session (22 Jun 1981)

Status: Up-to-date instrument.

See also

[Submissions to competent authorities by country](#)