The work environment in the Norwegian food and beverage industry

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OHS work in Norway – a risk based approach

- Main areas for action:
  - Circumstances that result in mental illness
  - Health damaging ergonomic conditions
  - Health threatening handling of chemicals
  - Serious risk of accidents

- Underlying assumption: **Systematic work on OHS in enterprises will necessarily lead to improvement of the working environment**

- Correct introduction of OHS means that enterprises will:
  - Obtain changes of knowledge and attitudes regarding OHS
  - Carry out risk assessment
  - Measures will be planned and implemented to reduce risks

- Goal: A satisfactory working environment providing healthy work conditions and meaningful work for everyone
The campaign

- Inspections of all Norwegian food business enterprises

- A better work environment, with special focus on:
  - Accidents and injuries
  - Ergonomics
  - Enhance the use of occupational health and safety personnel
  - Noise
  - Dust from flour

- Distribution of information to the inspectors

- Distribution of information to the enterprises
The project – 2000-2005

- Financed by the Norwegian Labour Inspectorate
- Map and describe the work environment in the Norwegian food industry, 2000 and 2005
- A tool for mapping the work environment
  - Assessments of workers’ subjective experiences
  - Assessment of executive leaders
- Evaluation and reporting of the results
- Knowledge distribution
- Develop understanding and competencies
- Internal evaluation within the Labour Inspectorate
- Contribute to the social debate
A model of risk assessment

**POTENTIAL RISKS**
- Physical/chemical
- Psychosocial
- Organizational

**UNDESIRED EXPOSALS**
- Degree
- Frequency
- Seriousness of the exposure as experienced by the worker

**UNDESIRED CONSEQUENCES**
- Physical injuries that may lead to disability and in worst case death
- Psychosocial consequences like stress, low motivation and low sense of identity

Preventive measures

The company’s alertness
Which conditions may be problematic?

- **Physical**
  - Repetitive and monotonous tasks
  - Postures giving constant loads on back
  - Work with arms held high
  - Routine work

- **Organizational**
  - Reorganization/new technology
  - Wage system
  - Work hours
  - Use of overtime
  - Time pressure
  - Involvement of customers

- **Psychosocial**
  - Demands to work performance
  - Control of work
  - Worker solidarity
  - Leader support
  - Harassment
  - Interest in OHS
  - Work satisfaction
  - Work-family conflict

The 2000 survey revealed that employees and management to a large extent have similar views.
Some main results

- An industry characterised by well-organized working conditions, with permanent employees and written contracts
- A physical work environment typified by ergonomic challenges and more noise than the average of the industry
- An organisational work environment characterised by assembly lines and strong influence from customers
- A well-functioning psychosocial work environment regarding social relations, mutual respect and low degrees of harassment
- Most problems tied to:
  - Time pressure and high work speed
  - Work demanding constant attention
  - Harassment at work
  - Work-family conflict
  - Ergonomically demanding work
- Consequences are stress, decrease in health condition and employee well-being, and absenteeism
The dynamics between the research project and the campaign
Overall quality management

- The project is based on a multi-institutional involvement

- Continuous dialogues concerning the design and progress of the project, as well as its organization:
  - Questionnaire development
  - Data collection
  - Knowledge distribution
Internal evaluation and exchange of experience after the campaign

- Web-based questionnaire to project leaders and inspectors participating in the 2000 survey and in the campaign
  - Work processes – how campaigns function as a work method for the Labour Inspectorate
  - Development of competencies – to what extent do the inspectors experience an increase in individual competencies regarding the evaluation and judgement of environmental risks through their participation in the campaign
  - The effect of the campaign – to what extent do inspectors and project leaders believe that the campaign substantially contributed to the reduction of risks related to work environment

More than 80 percent perceived the campaign and the project as leading to increased awareness, higher level of competencies and a better work environment
Usefulness for those involved

- Possibility for the enterprises to have a closer dialogue with the Labour Inspectorate
- A project and a campaign from the Labour Inspectorate adapted to the reality of the enterprises
- Evaluations of both work environment and OHS-work
- Written reports
- Increased knowledge and experience on evaluation of work environment enhance the level of competencies of the Labour Inspectorate
- Scientific publications
The uniqueness of design of this campaign

- A scientific evaluation of the work environment prior to the campaign – a combination of research project and campaign

- The campaign was designed and focused based on the results of the evaluation

- Combination of scientific and specific knowledge about the industry and the inspectors more general and vast experiences in the design

- Reassessment of the work environment and the effect of the campaign

- Knowledge distribution and exchange of experiences