



WORKINGonSAFETY.net

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WORKINGonSAFETY.net is an international network of individuals involved in occupational health and safety. Its key function is the joint development of prevention strategies, and the sharing of related experience. The WORKINGonSAFETY.net network was formed in 2001 with the financial support of the European Commission and in close cooperation with the ILO, in response to a proposal by Danish and Swedish OSH inspectorates. The network concerns itself solely with the prevention of occupational accidents, and has the function of promoting the exchange of experience, for example between labour inspectorates, researchers, policymakers, and labour and industry bodies.

A notable feature of WORKINGonSAFETY.net is the limitation of its scope to accident prevention. Occupational diseases and work-related health hazards are explicitly outside this scope. The reason for this focus is that in several Scandinavian countries, particularly Denmark, the number of occupational accidents has been rising again in recent years. According to the reports by the inspectorates in these countries, attention has increasingly been diverted in recent years from traditional safety at work to "soft factors".

The European Commission funded the development of an Internet-based communications platform (www.workingonsafety.net) and is sponsoring its ongoing operation through the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao. This English-language platform represents a sound basis for further pooling of information and experience among experts. WORKINGonSAFETY.net comprises the Internet platform together with a "who's who" database of experts.

The Internet platform offers the following features:

- Login to the database of experts at WORKINGonSAFETY.net
Participants are able to set up a page of their own and to indicate personal data: name, address, occupation, language(s) spoken, areas of activity, and the institution in which they are employed. The page should contain any information of interest to fellow professionals in the area of accident prevention. A photograph facilitates contact. In addition, current projects may be indicated, and previously unpublished documents uploaded.
- Searching for other experts (Find persons)
The primary objective of WORKINGonSAFETY.net is to bring together experts from all over the world who are involved in accident prevention. The database of experts serves this purpose.

Use of the database of experts (both registration and searches for other experts) is free of charge.

- Archive of documents (Find documents)
Users can access 84 previously unpublished documents on accident prevention. Experts may upload documents of their own to the website.
In addition, direct access is provided to a virtual journal, the "Safety Science Monitor", for publication of articles.

- Discussion fora (Debate)
The discussion of particular subjects relating to accident prevention contributes substantially to development of a prevention culture. Users can participate in ongoing discussions and also launch new discussions of their own. The debates contribute to discussions ahead and in the wake of WORKINGonSAFETY.net conferences.
- Links
The website also features links to further information on accident prevention and to other networks, such as the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao, and EUROSHNET.

Since its inception in 2001, over 800 experts from 80 countries have set up their own page in the network. WORKINGonSAFETY.net developed astonishingly rapidly, not only in the EU and EFTA countries, from which 75% of the experts originate, but far beyond them. The remaining 25% of users are scattered throughout the world: a majority come from Australia and the USA, but others can be found in Africa, South America and Asia. The network is not limited to communication over the Internet, but also promotes the exchange of experience face-to-face. The international WORKINGonSAFETY.net conferences provide participants with the opportunity to meet each other in person, and thereby to gain a picture of current developments in accident prevention at international level.

In 2002, during the Danish EU Presidency, a conference was held in Elsinore (Denmark) with the purpose of launching a permanent network of accident prevention experts. A general introduction to prevention strategies was followed by a presentation of accident prevention in a number of countries. 250 delegates received information on recent research results and proven practice for the prevention of occupational accidents worldwide. An insight was also provided into the safety culture in various countries. An important subject was accident prevention in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) exhibiting particular features and working conditions. Owing to a lack of financial and organizational resources, SMEs require particular support in issues of safety and the protection of health at the workplace.

The following conference was held in 2004 at the BG Academy in Dresden (Germany). The Federation of Institutions for Statutory Accident Insurance and Prevention (HVBG) was responsible for organization, together with the ILO and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. Approximately 280 delegates from 38 countries met to learn more about new strategies for accident prevention in Europe, international trends in the factory inspectorate systems, and new challenges to prevention in a changing world of work. In twelve parallel events, a wide spectrum of subjects were addressed, such as market surveillance in Europe, the effectiveness of prevention measures from cost-benefit perspectives, and the role of labour and industry bodies. New risks presented by the changing world of work were also examined, as were psychosocial factors.

A third conference is planned for September 2006 in the Netherlands. It is to be organized by the Dutch Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment and the Safety Science Group of Delft Technical University, and will be sponsored by the ILO and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

The objectives of the conference are:

- to improve understanding of the social, technical and individual aspects of processes resulting in occupational accidents

- to clarify the scientific terms and definitions in relation to accident prevention
- to promote and simplify the systematic prevention of occupational accidents by effective management of plant safety
- to assess alternative methods for safety regulations, and to provide regulators with access to them
- to communicate good practice and successful solutions in accident prevention to fellow professionals
- to bring experts together for the pooling of experience and to establish an international collaborative network of professionals.

The central question during the conference will be: "does it work?".

In the majority of countries in both the industrialized and developing world, occupational accidents and the management of risks continue to present the greatest problem at the workplace. Successful prevention activity is dependent upon greater co-operation between technical and official experts and upon approaches from various quarters. Knowledge grows with the increasing pooling of experience and collaboration. WORKINGonSAFETY.net represents a network of experts active in the area of accident prevention. The network draws researchers, regulators, labour inspectorates, safety experts, and other professionals into the sphere of research and policymaking.