

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH STRATEGY OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH

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FOREWORD

Work is the foundation of well-being, and health is one of the most important things in the life of people. Occupational safety and health (OSH) combines these two things in the workplace. By promoting health and safety at workplaces, occupational safety and health primarily seeks to maintain the working ability of the labour force as well as to identify, assess and prevent the health and safety risks of poor working conditions. The secondary objective is to eliminate already existing problems by means of corrective measures.

Successful occupational safety and health work can be manifested for example in the increasing number of employees who have preserved their working ability until retirement age and in a steady decline in the number of occupational accidents and diseases. It is also characterised by the increased availability of occupational safety and health services and the full coverage of statutory occupational health care. Among the indirect effects of occupational safety and health are higher productivity and lower costs incurred by poor working conditions. This is built on a safety culture assumed already to be at home and in schools. The guiding principle is that Finland is in the vanguard of European occupational safety and health.

The ministries are in charge of guiding and directing the social development in their fields of operation.

Implementation of the occupational safety and health strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health depends on at least two key factors. Firstly, the workplaces' capabilities, skills and will for taking occupational safety and health measures on their own initiative is in a key position. Secondly, authorities' direct contacts with workplaces have an important role in this work. Other sectors of administration support the implementation of the strategy, which essentially includes interaction between authorities, industry and labour market organisations.

This document has been drawn up by the Department for Occupational Safety and Health of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with other ministerial departments and the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates. The most important interest groups have made valuable comments on the strategy in the different phases of the drafting.

This document which presents the occupational safety and health strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health for the next few years is composed of two parts. First is a short summary of the strategy and after that a memorandum with motivations for and background information on the strategy.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will plan and take measures inside the Ministry and its administrative sector according to this strategy. We hope that also other bodies in the health and safety sector use this document as help when targeting their actions and developing cooperation between different parties.

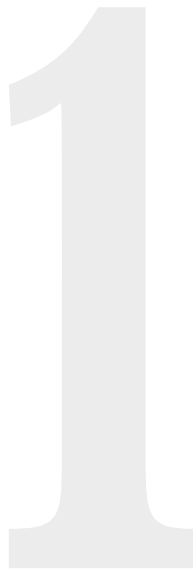
In Helsinki, April 1998

Permanent Secretary Markku Lehto

SUMMARY

The objective of the administrative sector of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is to maintain and promote the population's working ability and functional capacity so as to reduce premature retirement from working life. The primary goal of the occupational safety and health strategy is, by developing working conditions, to maintain and improve the employees' health, safety and working ability as well as to reduce occupational accidents and diseases and other work-induced deterioration of health. For this purpose, it aims at strengthening the workplaces' capabilities, skills and will to handle their health and safety issues on their own initiative in order to increase the workers' job satisfaction and the productivity of work. The purpose is also to increase the knowledge and resources of the district administration of occupational safety and health. The strategy will be implemented in close cooperation with parties in the labour market. The whole occupational safety and health administration acts in the European environment and works for a good working environment.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH STRATEGY OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH



Introduction

Working conditions are of vital importance to the well-being of people and the whole society. The safety and health of the employee is an essential prerequisite for working. Healthy and motivated workers produce welfare for themselves, their working community and society. For companies and other organisations, a capable worker is the most important resource and the fundamental precondition of productive action. The national-economic costs of work-induced losses of health make up a surprisingly high percentage of GNP, in addition to which there are indirect losses. The improvement of working conditions and promotion of the employees' – both men's and women's – working ability and functional capacity, and particularly the working ability of ageing people, are based on the needs of the whole society.

The strategic priority

The primary objective of the occupational safety and health administration as part of the administrative sector of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is to maintain and promote the workers' working ability and functional capacity and to prevent occupational accidents and diseases. Prevention of work-induced musculoskeletal disorders, mental well-being at work and workers' capabilities to cope with the work – as also control of work as a prerequisite for these – are the special goals for the development of occupational safety and health.

The strategy is based on the modern concept of occupational safety and health and the European environment

The subject matter of occupational safety and health is based on the concept of a good working environment taking into consideration the latest research data, the views of the parties involved in the labour market and European cooperation. It covers safety, health, terms of employment as well as mental well-being and job satisfaction, and expresses itself in the workplace's safety customs. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health puts special emphasis on the promotion of the workers' working ability and functional capacity and on the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases.

Building a good working environment calls for the management of work environment issues, viable and efficient organisation, the systematic management of safety and a capable and motivated personnel. Safety practices are manifested not only in a good corporate and organisational culture but also in safe conduct.

The Ministry targets OSH research and development, guidance and advice as well as supervision and the necessary preparation of laws in accordance with this idea.

Holistic, systematic and spontaneous action at workplaces

A good working environment is created in the workplace first and foremost by initiative.

This applies to all workplaces and types of work, and thus also concerns successive periods of short and temporary employment. The OSH administration supports and promotes the integration of safety and health operations with the workplace's other operations, which also emphasises the importance of each worker's competence and commitment to developing the working conditions and maintaining his or her working ability. Undisturbed action and good working and production conditions, i.e. a good working environment, form the basis of occupational safety and job satisfaction, the quality of products and services, and high productivity.

The OSH administration supports the capabilities of employers and others obliged by the Labour Protection Act to fulfil their obligations concerning safety and health at work and cooperation related to it. The administration promotes procedures whereby workplaces themselves, or through the services of an expert they have chosen, can prove their good safety practices and get them verified. The OSH administration investigates the economic impacts of working conditions and develops financial incentives for improving the working environment.

Corporate safety culture and safety management

The OSH administration encourages the workplaces' safety practices and safety management. Safety management is an important tool for preventive occupational safety. Safety culture is promoted also by general safety training and the training of attitudes, and by dissemination of safety knowledge.

Client-orientation

The functions of the OSH administration are based on the needs of society and working life. *The most important clients of the OSH district administration are at workplaces: the employers and the workers.* The duty of the OSH administration is to ensure that statutory occupational safety and health is fulfilled and improved. Thus it ensures, in cooperation with the em-

ployers, that the workers are provided with appropriate safety and health services and a decent working environment, to which they have a right. It gives the employers guidance and advice on how to carry out the necessary measures in an efficient and economical manner. It also provides information and advice on how occupational safety and health can be integrated with other safety and quality operations, where such integration is found necessary.

Development of the OSH district administration

The enforcement of occupational safety and health has an important social role. The OSH district administration enforces the minimum requirements of legislation and directs the development of operational systems at the workplaces. *The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health develops the functions and resources of the OSH Inspectorates.* The district personnel's professional and interactive skills are deepened and enlarged in the manner required by the strategy. These skills are taken into account as qualification requirements also when new personnel are employed.

The authorities direct their supervision according to the desired effects

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates work out the performance targets and agree on them, the emphasis being on the effects of the safety and health supervision. The Inspectorates target their supervision at such practices in the workplaces which support and promote safety and health at work and, on the other hand, at essential issues dealing with the supervision of compliance with statutory requirements, such as the supervision of employment relations.

The OSH Inspectorates adapt their measures to the workplaces' needs and most critical safety issues in their regions. The different needs and facilities of large and small enterprises, as also those of permanent and temporary jobs and successive short periods of employment, are taken into consideration. The Ministry follows the impact of safety and health supervision by studies and surveys, and keeps the impact analyses and evaluation methods up to date.

Diversification of the supervision methods is continued

The OSH administration introduces procedures required by the systems of internal control and safety management, as also workplace-oriented methods for

analysing safety levels. The advantages of the OSH Inspectorates networking with other authorities will be utilised. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health continues to complete the division of work and specialisation between the OSH Inspectorates.

The present statutory systems at workplaces should act in cooperation

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health helps to bring the management of safety and occupational health care at the workplace closer together in order to strengthen them both.

Measures taken by the Ministry support the implementation of the strategy

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health develops occupational safety and health work by networking as well as by targeting the performance of its subordinate administration according to objectives agreed upon. The essential parties in the network are the parties in the labour market, research and expert institutes in the health and safety sector, insurance companies and the European network. Finland participates in the preparation and implementation of the EU health and safety law with a high level of protection as a signpost.

When necessary, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health takes measures by which even other authorities, under the Ministry's guidance, can carry out duties necessary for the implementation of the strategy. This applies to both product control and workplace inspection. To raise the level of OSH knowledge at workplaces, the whole state administration and its powers to influence are used.

Developmental operations support the projects in line with the strategy

According to this strategy, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health sets objectives for OSH research and development and performance targets for the research and

expert institutes in its administrative sector. The Ministry works so as to have these targets taken into account in other areas of research and development. It acts for a better use of research results at the workplace. The Ministry follows particularly the impact of the research and development projects it has ordered.

The Ministry's internal synergy is utilised

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health develops the functions of its different units as well as the cooperation and division of work between them in order to benefit from their synergy.

Evaluation of the implementation of the strategy

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health evaluates how the strategy is implemented. In the follow-up and evaluation the Ministry uses the services of the Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. The implementation is evaluated from four aspects:

- parameters for occupational accidents and diseases and other cases of work-induced loss of health as well as parameters for resulting absenteeism and premature retirement,
- parameters for experience of working conditions,
- data illustrating changes in the working environment and in working communities' way of action and data describing the functions and modes of action of the OSH administration.

The OSH administration reforms its monitoring systems in compliance with the strategy.

The time span of the strategy

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the OSH administration direct and target their operations so as to implement the strategy over the next few years. The Ministry outlines the emphasis of the operations, and the whole OSH administration takes the corresponding measures in close cooperation with the labour market parties.

2. MEMORANDUM ON MOTIVATIONS



Introduction

The occupational safety and health administration operates in the European environment. Occupational safety and health legislation is within the competence of the European Union. Finland takes part in the preparation of Community legislation with a high level of protection as the goal. It also considers it important that Community legislation is implemented effectively in all Member States.

The objective of the administrative sector of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is to maintain and promote the population's working ability so as to prevent premature retirement. The primary goal of the occupational safety and health strategy is, by developing working conditions, to keep up and improve the employees' health, safety and working ability as well as to reduce occupational accidents, diseases and other work-induced losses of health. For this purpose, it aims at strengthening the workplaces' abilities, skills and will to handle their health and safety issues on their own initiative in order to increase the workers' job satisfaction and the productivity of work. The purpose is also to increase the knowledge and resources of the district administration of occupational safety and health (OSH Inspectorates), which provides inspection and other services for clients. The Ministry and the whole sector support the functions of the OSH Inspectorates. The strategy will be implemented in close co-operation with parties in the labour market.

Working conditions are in many ways significant to the well-being of people and society. Healthy and motivated workers produce welfare for themselves, their working community and society. For companies and other organisations, a capable worker is the most important resource and a fundamental prerequisite for productive operations.

The unity of work, leisure time and family is important to the well-being of an individual. In his or her work a person can be vulnerable to stress factors which are different from those of leisure time, e.g. physical and chemical agents. Heavy work and bad working postures may also be crucial to people's health and functional capability. The quality of working life has nevertheless generally improved over the last few decades, and this development has continued up to the present. Despite this haste and burn-out are still great challenges to well-being.

The risks of accident are today much higher in traffic, at home and in leisure time than at work. There are about 900 000 accidents per year. About 100 000

injuries are caused by intentional violence. Accidents lead to appr. 2 600 deaths and intentional violence to appr. 200 fatalities annually. The number of occupational accidents has during the past few years been a little over 100 000 (about 65 000 has led to at least three days' disability). The share of fatal occupational accidents has in recent years been 55...65, part of which have occurred in road traffic. In addition to this, at least the same number of people have died of occupational diseases, the causes of which trace back to the workers' previous exposure.

The risk-oriented safety aspect is complemented by the quality concept born in the 1990s. It focuses on maintaining and improving working ability. Occupational safety and health has direct links to the quality of production on the one hand and to the workers' responsibility for their working ability on the other. The quality of work and working environment is measured by different means including workplace surveys, ergonomic analyses and hygienic measurements. Stress inquiries, for example, tell something of the functioning of a working community. A person's working ability and functional capacity can be estimated by working ability indices, fitness tests and health examinations.

Working conditions and occupational safety and health actions have economic impacts which may be considerable. At the national-economic level, it has been estimated that work-related accidents, illnesses and disability pensions account for several percent points of GNP. In addition to this there are indirect losses, for instance in the form of productional disturbances and losses, but it is not purposeful to assess their volume from the national-economic standpoint. Instead, at the company and workplace level it is important to be aware of all the economic impacts of working conditions.

Good working conditions and healthy and motivated workers are preconditions for productive, economic and competitive action. From this point of view, the economic significance of working conditions directs the improvement of working conditions and occupational safety. However, effective direction is based on the fact that the economic impacts of working conditions are known.

The contributions needed to raise the working conditions to an adequate level are on the other hand part of the productional costs. All necessary safety measures are not economically profitable. There are particular financial incentives which have been created to function as economic means of boosting occupational safety and health in situations where the nec-

essary measures cause expenses and economic profitability is difficult to indicate. It is advisable to investigate the importance of these economic measures and the needs for them in view of the debate within the European Union.

The strategic priority

Working conditions and especially the physical working environment develop fairly slowly, and the changes are strongly linked with the changes in the production and industrial structure and the progress of technology. The development of workplaces and workforce seems to lead to a situation where the share of physically demanding work is decreasing. Demand for a highly educated workforce will increase and the relative importance of the basic factors of production (raw materials, natural conditions, untrained workforce) will decrease. The ageing of workforce makes bigger and bigger demands on work and the working environment.

According to the report "Work and Health in Finland in 1997" by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, musculoskeletal disorders and diseases of the circulatory system are still the main cause of most work-induced diseases and premature retirements. Therefore, the most important priority of occupational safety and health is to develop the physical working environment and to organise work so as to correspond with human qualities and needs better than before.

The quality of working life and experience of working conditions have been studied by interviewing the whole workforce and different industries. For example according to the working conditions barometer of the municipalities, lack of time as well as mental and physical strain of work perceived by employees are increasing while employee participation and social relationships are getting better.

According to the surveys on working conditions, employees have felt that mental strain and haste are increasing especially in nursing and service work. Stress symptoms have increased. There is a risk of external violence at small workplaces in the service branch. On the basis of an interview study, burn-out is more common than expected. Promotion of mental well-being is another essential priority of occupational safety and health.

The number of occupational accidents and also their number in relation to the amount of work has clearly and steadily decreased since the beginning of

the 1980s. The minor negative exceptions to this generally positive development have mainly been caused by cyclical fluctuations. Serious occupational accidents are still among the greatest challenges of occupational safety and health.

According to the register on work-induced diseases, the total number of occupational diseases has been clearly on the decrease in the 90s. Instead, the number of occupational diseases caused by chemical factors has remained almost unchanged and diseases caused by biological factors have doubled. Thus, in the 90s the proportion of occupational diseases caused by chemical and biological exposure substances has increased from less than a third to about one half. For these exposure substances the development is alarming.

The actual retirement age is nowadays about 59 years, which is too low for sustained financing of social security. Physically and mentally hard work contributes to this phenomenon.

The strategy is based on the modern concept of occupational safety and health and the European environment

Development of working life has long traditions. Occupational safety and health has had an important role in Finnish social policy. It is possible to view occupational safety and health and its development as well as the changing of its contents from many angles. The roots of occupational safety and health are mostly social but it has always had an economic aspect which starts from the assumption that healthy workforce is necessary for ensuring effective production. Occupational safety and health has also always been part of labour market policy. Nowadays we talk about the improvement of the working environment, working conditions and quality of working life, and it is associated with the improvement of working ability and functional capacity, undisturbed production as well as improved productivity, quality and customer service. Personnel is regarded as the most important resource of a workplace.

High quality and productivity and also high competitiveness of the organisation require undisturbed action and good working conditions. The good result of an organisation is based on the work contribution of each worker as well as the developmental ability of the individuals and the working community. The precondition of success is an atmosphere of confidence and companionship. Only a motivated worker is fully able to utilise his knowledge. When the basics of working

conditions are in order, the productivity of an organisation is more and more based on cooperation, functionality, flexibility and responsibility, and the employees' possibilities to develop themselves at work.

As a member state of the United Nations and its suborganisation the International Labour Organization, Finland has ratified a large number of conventions and recommendations on the protection of workers. Their impact on the occupational safety and health in our country has been and still is remarkable.

The great majority of OSH matters are within the competence of the European Community. There are two kinds of EC directives: harmonising ones and those defining the minimum level. The EC aims at a high level of safety for people at work by the Framework Directive on working environment and by individual directives.

During the first half of the 1990s, directives were examined, transposed into national laws and implemented in Finland at a fast rate. After the middle of the decade, the Finnish representatives have also been able to participate in their preparation. During the second half of 1999 Finland will hold the Presidency of the European Union and is then able to promote the proposals which it considers important.

The essential issues of the OSH legislation have been written down in the EC Framework Directive to improve the safety and health of workers at work. It lays down the principles of the preventive OSH policy of a workplace, which are: a) avoiding risks; b) evaluating the risks which can not be avoided; c) combating the risks at source; d) adapting the work to the individual; e) adapting to technical progress; f) replacing a dangerous substance, agent, etc. by a non-dangerous or less dangerous one; g) developing a prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relations and the impacts of factors related to the working environment; h) giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures; and i) giving appropriate instructions to the workers.

Finland's entry into the EU changed the product control of machinery and equipment used at work in the country. Earlier, type approvals given by OSH authorities and other corresponding procedures related to placing a product on the market were in a central position. These have for the most part been abandoned and replaced on the one hand by manufacturer's measures and, on the other, by new measures by authorities. New provisions concerning mainly the design and manufacture of products, the declaration of

conformity signed by the manufacturer and the CE marking affixed to the product obligate the manufacturer. Market surveillance and control by authorities are targeted at products after they have come onto the market or have been delivered for use. Market surveillance means measures by which authorities ensure that the manufacturer has fulfilled the obligations provided by law and that the products are also otherwise safe. Partly the same changes have also taken place in the product control of chemicals used at work.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Bilbao, Spain) is the newest EU institution in OSH matters. Its duty is to provide the EU institutions with information on the situation in the Member States and to disseminate information to them. Its operation is organised in the form of international and national networks.

The fourth programme of the European Communities on safety at work, industrial hygiene and occupational health will be in force till the end of the year 2000. It is based on the fact that new conditions - changes in technology, economy, products and society - also call for innovations in occupational safety and health. Prevention of occupational accidents and diseases still requires efforts. In this respect the EC legislation has been reformed. Now the Community policy emphasises information, guidance and supervision of the observation of the existing legislation. However, new risks and hazards may also require new laws. One of the cornerstones of the Community OSH programme is the idea that good working conditions also promote competitiveness. The basis is a dialogue with the parties in the labour market. OSH policy does not succeed without their support.

At the moment, new ways of organising work are discussed within the European Union. One of the issues there is whether it is possible to achieve a new kind of cooperation for a more productive, committed and learning organisation of work. Also, occupational safety and health must be adapted in order to take into consideration the changes taking place in work organisation. One of the most important questions in the European debate is what the advantages and disadvantages of the new forms of work organisation, flexible working hours and flexible employment contracts are to the workers' health, safety and working conditions and also to the management of those matters.

Studies have shown that also occupational accidents often are related to bad management practices. Instead, good management is manifested in occupational safety and health, which in turn requires a good working environment. A good working environment

protects workers, improves work motivation and also promotes the quality of production and productivity. In addition to being an independent goal, occupational safety and health is also a means for encouraging quality and professional awareness, which is important in developing personnel.

Holistic, systematic and spontaneous action at workplaces

The basis and primary objective of the occupational safety and health strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is the ability, skill and will of workplaces to take care of their OSH matters themselves. The strategy supports achievement of this goal. The purpose is that most workplaces supervise their working conditions themselves and take care of their development. Regional, local and branch-specific programmes and networks can support the workplaces in this work. Also the system built-up for cooperation at workplace level must undergo changes in order to correspond with the renewed work organisations.

In modern and well-managed organisations co-operation is carried out for common goals. Good organisation of work and management takes account of the workers' well-being and working ability. Development of working conditions and occupational safety and health are based on knowledge, will and proficiency, and it works best as part of the actual business operation.

As the law prescribes, occupational safety and health is the responsibility of the employer. However, in practice everyone is responsible for developing working conditions and working ability. If occupational safety and health is separated from other operations and the importance of working conditions to the operation of the organisation is not understood, working environment questions may remain unimportant.

Development of working life, demands for integrating occupational safety and health with other operations and also the viewpoint of productivity and economy have meant extension of the concepts of working environment and occupational safety and health. Today, these concepts are identified with safe and healthy conditions, mental well-being and job satisfaction as well as proficiency and motivation, functionality and the organisation's effectivity and good management.

Work, leisure time and family are all important for the worker's health. From this viewpoint, individuals are very much responsible for taking care of their health and maintaining and developing their working

ability. The different sectors of social and health policy cross here, and coordination of the measures is important for successful implementation of the policy.

Corporate safety culture and safety management

The safety culture of a workplace means all the matters by which the workplace defines, expresses and implements safety. It may manifest itself in safety and job satisfaction, occupational accidents and diseases, positive or negative attitudes towards safety or conscious risk-taking. Safety management is a tool to strive for safety objectives. Safety is also built through work. Safety management usually emphasises either work- or hazard-oriented matters or issues related to workers. Which one is emphasised depends on the view what safety is considered to be based on and what the reason for negative factors is thought to be.

Work- or hazard-oriented approach emphasises, among other things, hazard identification and risk assessment, formal instruction and guidance, management and supervision as well as punishment for offences. A worker-oriented approach stresses identification of safe practices and rewarding for them, functionality of human relations at the workplace, general and informal communication, safe behaviour of workers and positive feedback. In practice, each safety culture is a combination of these theoretical approaches.

Many methods and standards have been developed for safety management. The OSH administration can make them known and give guidance in their use. However, the workplace itself is responsible for the safety culture. According to surveys, a good safety manager is always able to assess and to carry out the necessary measures according to the workplace and the situation.

Client-orientation

Our industrial and productional structure has undergone and is still undergoing great changes. Also the division of tasks between the private and the public sector and the service structure within the public sector are changing. The service branch, the public sector included, is the biggest employer but industry and trade will be remarkable employers also in the future. The proportion of agriculture and forestry as an employer has continuously decreased during the past decades. The share of small companies is very big and it is expected to grow further.

The needs and expectations concerning the development of working conditions and occupational

safety and health have changed. Now the importance of a good working environment and personnel to productivity and successful operation is generally emphasised. At the same time, juxtaposition and consideration of occupational safety and health as a question of interests have been set aside. Development of working conditions is seen more and more as a common interest, and the ability to integrate occupational safety and health with other operations as effectively and economically as possible has now become the biggest challenge.

Workplaces and their expectations and needs differ greatly. Big companies usually have knowledge, competence and also resources to assess, follow and develop working conditions. In big organisations co-operation has usually been arranged appropriately. The situation is different in small companies and for them, the support given by authorities and the action of OSH authorities may be of crucial importance to balanced development.

At workplaces, workers also expect more from OSH work than before. They are often dissatisfied with the operation of the OSH organisation, which may have diverged from decision-making and other action. Workers are in many ways the best specialists in occupational safety and health and their knowledge should be utilised. When motivating the personnel and utilising their professional knowledge and the needs to develop it are taken into account at the same time, the challenges are big also from the workers' viewpoint. On the other hand, a skilful and effective OSH administration is a remarkable support to workers in situations where employers cannot or do not want to take the demands for a healthy and safe working environment into account.

The statutory duty of the OSH administration is to promote occupational safety and health. In order to fulfil it, the law especially mentions two matters. They are to develop safety and health at work and also to ensure that legal provisions and regulations concerning occupational safety and health are observed.

Development of the OSH district administration

The main idea of the implementation of the strategy is to strengthen the part of the OSH administration which is in direct contact with workplaces.

According to the experiences from workplace inspection, the supervision of the observation of the minimum level of OSH regulations is still necessary. The supervision is mainly aimed at preventing occupation-

al accidents and diseases and avoiding exposure to chemical substances. In addition, actions maintaining the working ability of workers and promotion of mental well-being are supported.

In 1996 the OSH Inspectorates carried out about 31 500 workplace inspections. 7 200 of them were aimed at employment matters and 2 300 were pre-market control.

In addition to the actual workplace inspections, during the same year there were about 5 500 other measures (permits, statements, etc.). In this connection attention was also paid to developing OSH actions of companies, for example by following the development and the implementation of prevention policies on safety and health.

About one third of these altogether 37 000 measures were due to requests from workplaces. About two thirds of the measures were aimed at workplaces with less than 10 employees.

Divided according to branches, the measures were directed as follows:

industry	22%
transport and storage	18%
construction	15%
wholesale and retail trade	11%
business services	5%
training	5%
public administration	4%
accommodation and catering	4%
public health service and social services	4%
agriculture and forestry	3%
others altogether	9%

According to the results of a survey, the customers of the OSH Inspectorates contacted them (mostly by telephone) about 140 000 times in addition to the above mentioned actions. Two thirds of the contacts concerned employment matters.

The operational expenses of the OSH administration are about FIM 140 million a year. The number of personnel is about 540, of which about 440 are in the Inspectorates.

The supervision of working conditions and product control have been integrated into the OSH administration, and the experiences have mainly been good.

According to the ILO Constitution, the district administration of occupational safety and health acts as an independent authority. In practice the need for co-operation with other authorities has increased little by

little. As workplace structures are changing and health and safety problems, which earlier were fairly technical, now also concern for example employment matters, this means a challenge to the development of the personnel.

The authorities direct their supervision according to the desired effects

It is quite generally known that the state of working conditions depends on the willingness and ability of workplaces to organise and manage the operations and to build the outward circumstances of the working environment. The authorities' supervision has traditionally been directed at removing defects by inspecting working conditions and obliging employers to remedy the discovered defects. During the more and more rapid changes at workplaces, this work has not apparently been very effective and efficient because new defects are emerging all the time in new connections. It has not been sufficiently emphasised that also the authorities' measures should be directed so that the biggest possible number of workers would achieve the best possible working conditions where remarkable disadvantages would no more appear.

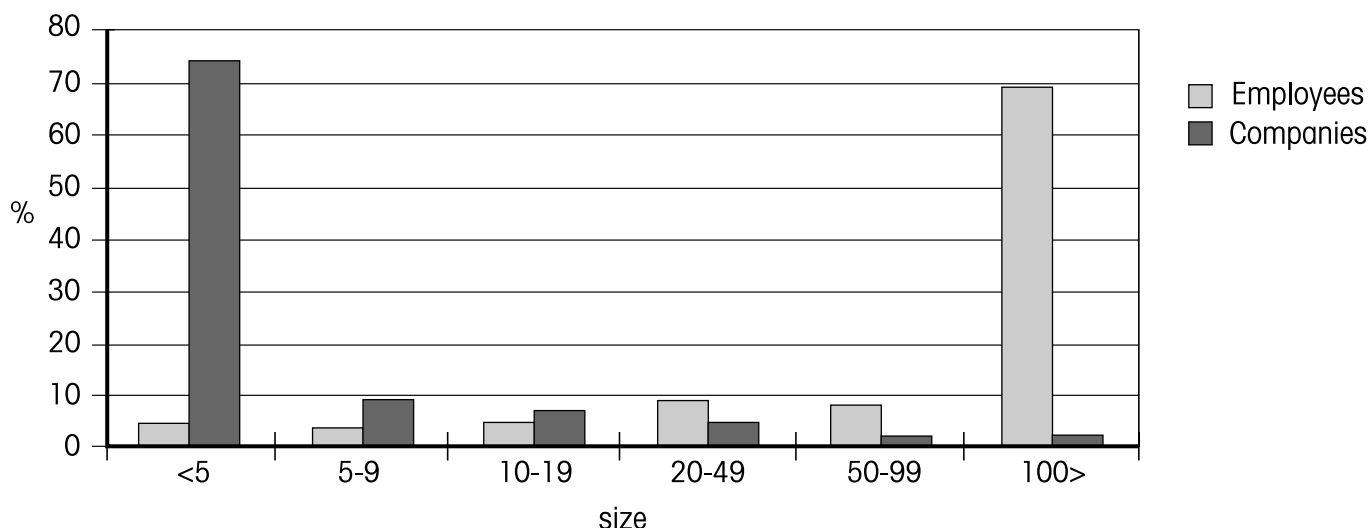
Understanding the customers' situation in a right way and adapting the measures better to the changing situations aims at improving the responsiveness of the administration. The purpose is to produce quickly what the customers need. The methods of supervision can also be extended by using the expert knowledge of other parties in occupational safety and health.

Diversification of the supervision methods is continued

The workplaces, which are the objects of supervision, have changed in many ways and especially quickly during the last few years. A uniform supervision model for occupational safety and health is not any longer very suitable for the workplaces the development of which supervision authorities have supported in different ways over the years. Nowadays workplaces demand good service also from the OSH administration. Therefore the administration must be aware of the needs of the workplaces and develop its services all the time. The surveys show that the authorities must keep more and more up-to-date and be able to adapt their measures according to expectations.

The aim is that the OSH administration meets the needs of society, the environment and clients. New risks and defects are identified quickly. The state of the working environment is followed nationally, regionally

The number of employees and companies according to size



and locally. OSH research serves the changing needs of the practical working life. Information flows well from one party to another. Manufacturers and importers see to it that there are no defective products on the market or at workplaces.

After reaching this aim, the occupational safety and health administration is able to assess workplace-specific and regional needs and the impact of its own activities.

Workplace inspection must have a high quality and profound and comprehensive impacts when evaluated at international and European levels.

The control of products used at work is also harmonised within the European Union. The functioning of the Internal Market is built on Community legislation based on a high level of safety, its effective implementation and enforcement.

Finland is already now known as a country which implements the Community laws and actively protects its national interests. The market surveillance of machinery, chemicals and other products used at work is effective. Only products which comply with the requirements are found on the market and acquired to workplaces in order to reduce the health and safety risks of working conditions. The OSH administration plans and carries out these measures in cooperation with other authorities, labour market organisations as well as industrial, commercial and standardisation organisations and expert institutes.

The present statutory systems at workplaces should act in cooperation

The concrete measures for safer work operations and better occupational health are taken at workplaces. All other safety actions aim at supporting this work. Large workplaces have full-time safety personnel and good opportunities of carrying out safety tasks requiring even high expert knowledge. Whereas small workplaces have smaller resources and more often need outside assistance. The aim is that occupational safety and health is a natural part of work and it is included in the management system of the workplace operations and that occupational safety and health is taken into account in planning and decision-making.

According to the Central Statistics Office, there are 185 000 companies in Finland (in 1994). Only 6 per cent of them are workplaces with at least 10 employees but the total number of employees in them is three quarters of all employees employed by companies. The company statistics of the Central Statistics Office do not include the workplaces in public administration.

There are about 231 000 workplaces (in 1997) in the register of the OSH administration. In this register workplace, from the viewpoint of supervision, means an appropriate, functional unity.

At the workplace it is the employer who is responsible for occupational safety and health. He or she may also delegate safety tasks to other competent persons. Workers are in many ways the best experts and

developers of their own working conditions. Everyone is responsible for his or her health and safety and the safety of the working community. It is possible to further increase the role of workers in developing the working conditions.

At workplaces, working for occupational safety and health together with the line organisation, there were about

- 6,400 safety committees
- 13,600 safety representatives
- 10,100 safety supervisors
- 7,400 additional members of safety committees
- 22,000 deputy representatives
- 8,500 ombudsmen.

The employer nominates a safety supervisor in case he himself does not act as such. Thus every workplace has a safety supervisor. A safety representative is chosen by employees; however, there are not safety representatives at all the workplaces where they according to law should or could be chosen. The safety committee has representatives of the employer and the employees. Safety supervisors, representatives and committees, which exist at workplaces for safety co-operation, are prescribed by law, whereas safety ombudsmen are appointed by agreements between labour market organisations.

Due to OSH legislation and agreements, occupational safety and health has often been separate from other workplace actions, and in some companies it still is. It has been proposed that uniting the development of occupational safety and health, environmental protection and quality systems would secure and serve the actions of the company. The company's internal audit would be suitable for supervising all these three sectors. After necessary examinations, it must be determined whether companies carrying out dangerous, nowadays licensed, operations and their risk management systems should be certified. Certification would replace the licences.

In addition to the line organisation in charge of occupational safety and health and the OSH organisation assisting it, at many workplaces there are also other actors taking care of the safety of the company and the personnel. Together with comprehensive risk management, these actors may form a meaningful network which ensures the safety of the different operations of the company.

Due to various changes in working life, previous tasks have often been replaced by new duties and a new division of work, and the number of different types of employment is nowadays fairly high. In future, more

attention must be paid to the occupational safety and health problems of employees in various types of employment.

In 1994 about 1.4 million wage earners were covered by occupational health care. Occupational health care is available to 30 per cent of agricultural entrepreneurs and 20 per cent of other entrepreneurs. In big companies this service is provided for everyone but for example in small companies, in short-term employments and construction work the percentage is smaller. Occupational health care covers about 70 per cent of the small companies.

In 1995, health insurance compensated employers 50 per cent, i.e. FIM 525 million, for the operational costs of occupational health care. About 50,000 workplace visits were made, of which about 31,000 by occupational nurses, about 10,000 by occupational physicians and 9,000 by physiotherapists. Physicians carried out 176,000 health examinations and nurses 247,000 examinations. In 1995, the Social Insurance Institution compensated entrepreneurs FIM 3.1 million, most of the sum went to farmers. The number of farmers within the scope of occupational health care was 10,700 in 1994 and 8,700 in 1995.

About 2,000 nurses, 1,500 physicians, 500 physiotherapists, 160 psychologists and 650 assisting persons work in occupational health care. In 1995, occupational health care services were produced by health centres (20 per cent of workplaces), private clinics (30 per cent), occupational health centres of companies (30 per cent), and occupational health centres owned jointly by companies (10 per cent).

In addition to the occupational safety and health organization, the most natural co-operation parties of the line organisation at workplaces are usually the co-determination organisation and the occupational health care personnel. Also environment, fire and rescue personnel have remarkable expert knowledge on safety matters. External experts often support them in different situations. It is crucial for successful occupational safety and health that co-operation between different parties works.

Measures taken by the Ministry support the implementation of the strategy

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is, on the one hand, part of the staff of the Government and, on the other, the leader of its administrative sector. The Ministry concentrates on tasks serving the staff role of the Government, the direction and management of the

subordinate administration as well as international co-operation and EU coordination. Management by objectives is developed towards group management, the basic idea being that the whole administrative sector of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health forms a group-type unity. The Ministry can also flexibly organise tasks or actions to be carried out elsewhere.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health applies these principles also to matters concerning occupational safety and health, and it develops the actions, cooperation and task division of its units to achieve synergetic benefits. At first it emphasises measures necessary to improve, maintain and restore employees' working ability and functional capacity as well as to promote chemical safety and industrial hygiene. The Ministry adjusts the synergy objectives and their implementation when working out operational and economic plans.

Most occupational safety and health matters are within the competence of the European Union. The EU institutions dealing with OSH matters are an important part of the OSH network of the Ministry and also of the OSH district administration. Advisory and technical committees on occupational safety and health, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, European research institutes and OSH authorities in other member states are important actors in this network.

For example the following tripartite planning and cooperation bodies function in the different sectors of worker protection:

- Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health
- Advisory Board on Occupational Health Care
- Finnish Tripartite ILO Committee
- Advisory Committee on Occupational Chemical Safety
- Advisory Committee on Preparation of Occupational Safety Regulations
- Labour Council
- district committees on occupational safety and health in OSH Inspectorates, and
- numerous advisory committees of different sectors in public administration.

The Centre for Occupational Safety is a cooperation body of labour market organisations. It carries on outstanding training and publishing activities. The sectoral committees on safety work are based on agreements made between labour market organisations.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health employs almost 600 persons (in 1997). Its budget is

about FIM 260 million, of which more than 60 per cent is government subsidy. The institute strives for a prominent or leading position in targeted fields of research and service. It participates in official expert bodies, technical standardisation, risk assessment, implementation of separate programmes and cooperation with the EU agencies in Dublin and Bilbao. About 40 per cent of its working time is used for work environment research. About 140 man-years of the resources of the Technical Research Centre of Finland are directed to work environment research. Research and expert work on working conditions is carried out also in many other research institutes, universities, institutions of higher education and companies.

The Finnish Work Environment Fund allocates research and development grants as well as scholarships from the funds it has received from accident insurance payments. Other financiers are for example the Academy of Finland, the Social Insurance Institution, the Farmers' Social Security Institution and the Technology Development Centre. The financier in the state administration is the State Treasury. A new source of finance is the European Social Fund.

Training on occupational safety and health is included in vocational basic education with the mainstreaming principle. It does not yet fulfil the objective in all respects. Basic education in working environment matters is given by schools of different branches and institutions of higher education; further education, for example, by the Centre for Occupational Safety, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, trade unions and insurance companies. Higher education is given at universities and other institutions of higher education.

In the training at workplaces, the perspective on occupational safety and health must always be kept, otherwise safety work is in danger of declining even though basic and further education are better than ever. Certain basics of occupational safety and health must always be known but changes in the working environment require constant improvement of OSH knowledge and skills.

The Finnish Centre for Radiation and Nuclear Safety, the National Public Health Institute, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health and the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health are also subordinate to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Their research, development and monitoring work contribute to improving workers' safety and health.

The rescue services administration led by the Ministry of the Interior, the Safety Technology Centre

subordinate to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and also the regional environment centres subordinate to the Ministry of the Environment, produce services which are useful for the safety operations at workplaces.

The National Workplace Development Programme (1996-99) of the Ministry of Labour improves productivity and the quality of working life at workplaces. This research-aided programme for example supports projects at workplaces, creates cooperation networks, boosts initiativeness at workplaces and utilisation of research. Also the productivity programme of the Ministry of Labour contributes to occupational safety and health.

Accident insurance companies counsel and guide their customers in preventing occupational accidents and managing risks as well as in other problems related to the working environment. The Federation of Accident Insurance Institutions compiles every year statistics on accidents and occupational diseases and coordinates the investigation of all fatal occupational accidents together with labour market organisations.

Developmental operations support the projects in line with the strategy

Targeting the operations in order to eliminate serious problems. The development of society and technology makes it possible to combat serious working environment problems and to take better account of the employees' needs. The aim is to further reduce work-induced musculoskeletal disorders, occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

The primary task of occupational safety and health is to promote health and safety at work and to maintain people's working ability by means of safe technology, industrial hygiene, ergonomics, etc. The developmental operations are targeted at occupations and work tasks which involve specific stresses or serious hazards.

Consideration of mental well-being as part of the whole working environment. The well-being of an employee is based on a healthy and safe environment, a well-functioning working community and a good organisation of work. Excessive or adverse mental strain and inadequate control of work are a threat to employees' mental well-being and working ability. Only a motivated worker is fully able to utilise his or her knowledge. Therefore working conditions must be developed as a whole and occupational safety and health must be integrated to other operations.

Effective development of working conditions requires consideration of mental well-being and improvement of working conditions as a whole. The aim is to increase mental well-being at work and to improve control of work. Then, people's need for development must also be taken into account.

Integration of occupational safety and health and cooperation. Effective occupational safety and health at its best is daily activities and cooperation where workers are able to evaluate the state of their own working environment and to prevent possible hazards. The development of working conditions, which has been integrated into the actual operations and which is based on the knowledge of every employee, is also flexible, productive and economical.

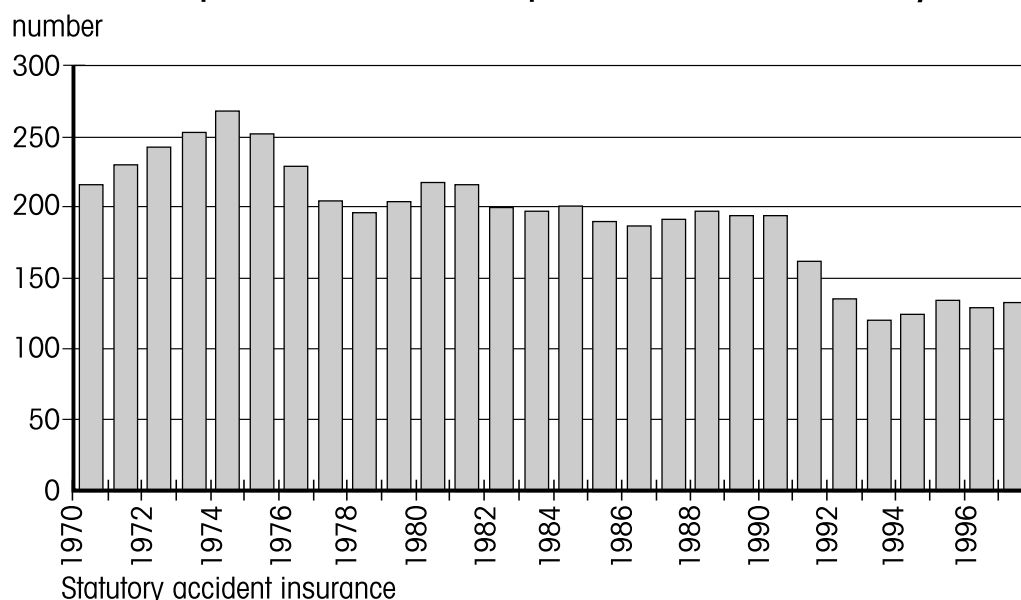
Working conditions must be developed in an atmosphere of confidence and partnership. Successful safety work requires good cooperation at workplaces and even deeper integration of occupational safety and health with other operations. At the same time, the responsibility of each employee for developing working conditions is emphasised.

Strengthening economic motivation. The expenses caused by problems in working conditions are distributed between individuals, companies and other organisations, and society. The socio-economic cost effects of working conditions and occupational safety and health can be regarded as grounds for the OSH actions practised by society and state authorities. If society takes the responsibility for most expenses caused by working conditions, this may hamper economic motivation for improving working conditions. It has been discussed whether companies should also be responsible for the costs which occupational accidents and diseases cause to the whole society. On the other hand, companies and other organisations usually underestimate the economic impact of working conditions due to inadequate monitoring and calculation.

It is advisable to examine the financial incentives promoting the development of working conditions. The interest of workplaces in examining and taking account of the economic impact of working conditions must be further increased.

Knowledge, attitudes and skills. The positive development of working conditions is strongly connected with knowledge, skills and will at all levels and especially in the workplace. Will depends much upon knowledge and attitudes. Because expert knowledge on occupational safety and health is necessary in in-

Occupational accidents reported to insurance companies and the State Treasury 1970-1997 (1000)



dustrial life, adequate quality and amount of training must be provided in order to maintain the high level of knowledge. The importance of research in occupational safety and health has increased along with development. Research of the working environment should be coordinated in order to direct resources to the crucial problems according to the changing needs of working life. The utilisation of research results in the development of working conditions can be improved.

In training, occupational safety and health matters are dealt with from various aspects in vocational guidance as well as in the educational contents and methods. Basic working environment education includes training on working environment according to the mainstreaming principle. Special training on working environment will be extended. Direction of research will be improved and programme units will be provided. Distribution and exploitability of research data will be improved. International research projects will be increased and international sources of funding will be used effectively.

Evaluation of the implementation of the strategy

In the end, the implementation of the occupational safety and health strategy must be evaluated on the basis of the real development of working conditions and the quality of working life. According to this strategy, working conditions and occupational safety and health are broad concepts, and there are no unambiguous criteria or indicators to evaluate them generally. The implementation of the strategy must be followed

by utilising widely statistics and research on working conditions. If necessary, a total appraisal based on a separate survey will be carried out.

Statistics on occupational accidents have been compiled relatively reliably for decades. Statistics on accidents are a good barometer of the level of working conditions, especially in the long run. Risks of occupational accidents are connected with economic cycles and structural changes in industry and commerce, which must be taken into account when the development of accidents is evaluated. The number of occupational accidents has decreased steadily since the peak year 1974. Accident frequency (the number of occupational accidents per million working hours) has fallen from about 35 to 22 during the past 20 years.

The figure below includes all the occupational accidents reported to insurance companies and the State Treasury. About half of them are occupational accidents which resulted in absence of at least 3 days. The number of fatal occupational accidents has halved during the past 15 years (40 - 50/year). The number of occupational and fatal accidents is the EU average.

About 40 per cent more accidents occur at workplaces with less than 50 employees (all branches) than at those with more than 200 employees. In industry the figure is even higher, about 60 per cent. Workplaces with less than 10 employees have less accidents than the average.

The differences between different industries are big. For example, accident frequency in housing construction is more than fourfold compared with trade.

Viewed by occupational groups, there are even fivefold differences in accident frequency compared to the average.

Occupational disease is a legal and medical concept. The number of occupational diseases depends essentially on the legislative definition. Also the facts how research develops and which matters are studied seem to have an effect on the number of occupational diseases. Statistics on occupational diseases are compiled reliably and it is important to follow their development.

The number of occupational diseases is now again at the same level as 10 years ago, about 6 000 cases a year. In certain dangerous occupations, the risk of occupational disease is even 40-fold compared with some less dangerous occupations.

The most common causes of disability pensions are musculoskeletal disorders, mental disturbances and diseases of the circulatory system. All these are affected by work and working conditions, and they must be followed up.

Employees' experiences and opinions, which are followed by inquiries, must be taken into account when the development of working conditions is evaluated. This way we receive information on how employees experience the working conditions in practice in the middle of the changes and developments of industrial life and working life.

According to the Work and Health interview survey (1997), three out of four employees find the working

atmosphere uninhibited and pleasant; one out of four finds it tense and strained. The relations between fellow employees and their possibilities to get help are good especially at small workplaces. According to the survey, almost 4 per cent of employees suffer from mental violence, the problem being more usual in the public than in the private sector. According to the survey, treatment which is found to be partial is related to bad working atmosphere and it leads to disturbances in well-being.

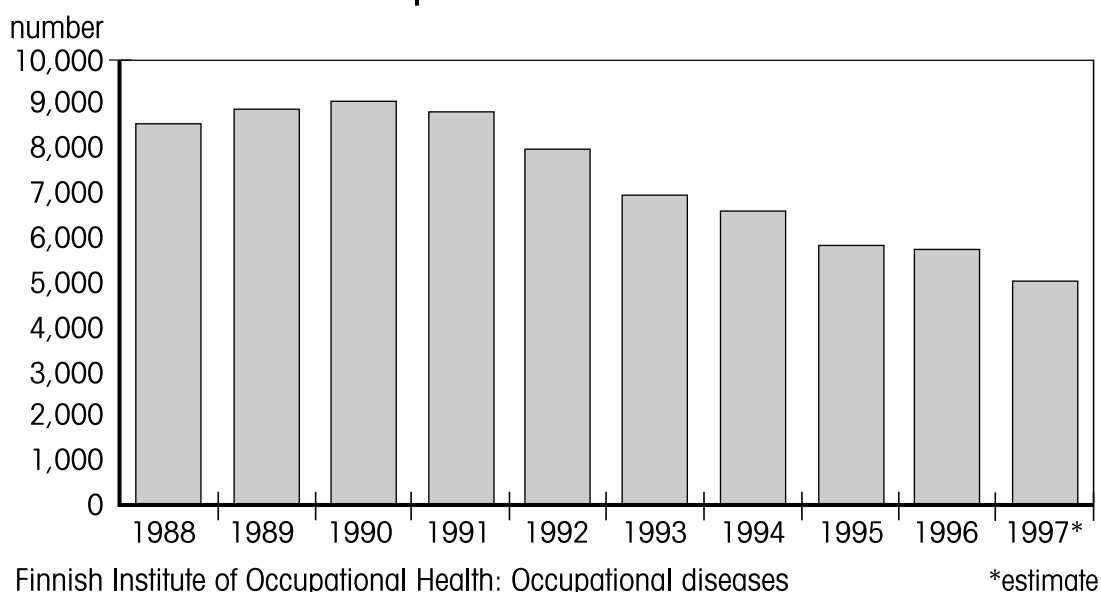
The time span of the strategy

The purpose is to implement the objectives of the occupational safety and health strategy over the next few years. The chosen time span is affected especially by two matters: firstly, the age structure of the work force - the baby boomers will retire during the next ten-year period - and secondly, the slowness of changes due to the character of these matters. The working environment is also changing along with investments, increase in knowledge, changes of generations and other matters which are developing apart from occupational safety and health and which cannot be speeded up artificially.

The implementation of the strategy will be divided into periods and linked to the planning and follow-up system of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in the following way.

The tripartite Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, whose statutory duty is to deal with matters of principle concerning occupational safety

Occupational diseases 1988-1997



and health and promotion of occupational safety and health, follows the implementation of the strategy. It gives the Ministry its follow-up report in the years 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010. If necessary, the strategy will be revised in 1999 and also thereafter in a way required by the current Government policy.

The state budget proposals and the Ministry's action plan are made in accordance with the strategy. Annual targets are set in the action plan and their implementation is followed in monthly negotiations between the Permanent Secretary and the Department for Occupational Safety and Health. The implementation of the plan is described in the Government report.

The performance targets of the OSH district administration are made in accordance with the state budget

in a way required by the strategy. The performance targets of the OSH district administration will be revised thoroughly in 1999 and after that in 2005.

The fourth action programme for health and safety of the European Union covers the years 1996-2000, and the fifth programme will probably come under preparation at the turn of the millennium. Finland will participate in and contribute to this preparation in accordance with this strategy, and in turn takes the programme of the Union into account in the implementation of its strategy. Considering Finland's Presidency, the targets for utilising Finnish knowledge on occupational safety and health are also prepared when the northern dimension of the European Union is implemented.