

Occupational Safety and Health in Finland

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

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Work and working conditions have great importance for the well-being of people and society. In Finland, occupational safety and health is based on the concept of a good working environment, which besides occupational safety and health, covers terms of employment and the psychic well-being of the employees.

The main objective of occupational safety and health is to maintain and develop health, safety and work ability of the employee, as well as to prevent occupational accidents and illnesses. Particular areas of development are prevention of work-related musculo-skeletal disorders and the promotion of the employee's mental well-being and working ability.

The occupational safety and health administration enhances the workplace's own capacity and will to improve the working conditions, and in general to manage the occupational safety and health issues independently, so that the

employees' contentment with work and productivity are improved.

Integrating occupational safety and health into other activities of the enterprise, as well as the viewpoints of productivity and economy have meant extending the concept of occupational safety and health. In addition to safety and health, it also contains mental well-being of the workers, contentment with the work, skills and motivation, good organisation and management.

The employer has responsibility, provided by law, over the safety and health aspects of the work, but also the employee has obligations concerning improving working conditions and maintaining work ability.

The occupational safety and health administration supports employers and employees to improve working conditions and fulfil obligations, as well as in integrating occupational safety and health into other activities of the workplace.

Operational Principle of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

The occupational safety and health administration, in close co-operation with the labour market organisations, affects the functioning of the workplaces and working environment by increasing the employees' occupational safety, well-being, health and results of their activities.

Improving Working Conditions



During recent years, the cultures of occupational safety and attitudes toward the development of working conditions have changed in a positive way. The importance of health and well-being of workers, in terms of productivity and competition, is better understood and taken into account. However, working conditions, especially the physical work environment, change rather slowly.

Goal-directed work for occupational safety and health has reduced the number of occupational accidents and illnesses. The frequency of occupational accidents (number of accidents in a million working hours) has fallen by a third during the last twenty years. In comparison with other EU countries Finland has a good average score, though it has to be said that Sweden's statistics on occupational accidents are more favourable than Finland's.

The working conditions seem to have developed in a positive way during the early 2000's. Pressure and stress have decreased but sick absences have increased. More often they are caused by musculo-skeletal disorders and mental health problems.

People feel that the contents of work and the quality of working life have also improved. Reorganisation of workplaces and work itself has made it possible to pay more attention to the employees' needs and well-being.

Ageing of the employees is a significant matter as regards occupational safety and health. It affects the development needs of working conditions and the direction of occupational safety and health.

The cost caused to society by occupational accidents and illnesses is estimated to be approximately 2.8 billion euros or 2% of the GNP.

Occupational Safety and Health at the Workplace

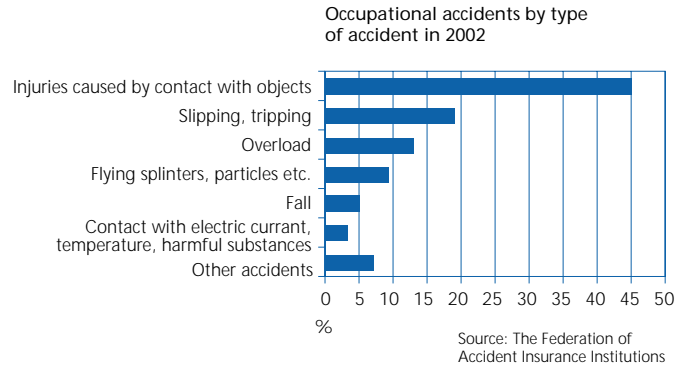
The employer is in charge of all occupational safety and health at the workplace. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the employer has to take into account everything as regards the quality of work, working conditions, employee's age, gender, working skills and other conditions that are regarded reasonably necessary in order to protect the employee from exposure to accidents or risks to his or her health. Safety should be ensured already in the planning stages of the work and work premises. In addition, risks and disadvantages have to be monitored continuously and if necessary, measures should be taken to analyse and prevent accidents, health hazards and other risk situations.

The employer must make the employee familiar with the conditions of the workplace and the correct working methods, as well as any occupational safety regulations. The employee in turn has to follow instructions and notify superiors or occupational safety and health representative of defects noticed.

Co-operation Concerning Occupational Safety and Health

The employer nominates an occupational safety and health manager for the co-operation concerning occupational safety and health, unless he wishes to take the position himself. Employees can choose an occupational safety and health representative and two vice representatives for negotiations conducted with the employer and the occupational safety and health authorities. A representative has to be chosen, if there are more than 10 employees.

At workplaces with a minimum of 20 employees, an occupational safety and health committee comprising representatives of the employer, workers and clerical employees shall be established. It is the duty of the committee to pro-



mote safety and health at the workplace. The occupational safety and health representative has the right to attend the meetings of the committee and to speak there.

When necessary, the committee presents the employer with proposals for improving working conditions, developing occupational health care as well as for the arrangement of occupational safety and health training and work guidance. In addition, the committee participates in activities which aim at maintaining working ability as well as in occupational safety and health inspections at the workplace.



Occupational Safety and Health Action Programme and Risk Assessment

The employer establishes an occupational health and safety action programme in the workplace, which includes information on risks and ways of minimising them, as well as how occupational safety and health has been organised, and the assignment of responsibility. The action programme has to cover activities which maintain the ability to work.

The action programme is based on a risk assessment. The risks are mapped, their level and probability are assessed and decisions are then made on the actions to eliminate or manage them.

Risk assessment aims at identifying risks caused by the work and facilitates the employer's activities in ensuring the safety and health of the employees. The action programme aims at developing working conditions according to the resources of the workplace. Respect of the action programme is a part of modern safety management.

Activities Maintaining Work Ability

Functions aiming at maintaining work ability cover all activities which help the employer and employees and the co-operation organisations at the workplace to improve and support the working and operating ability of all the employees in all stages of their career.

The majority of Finnish employees are covered by the activities enhancing working ability. The development measures at workplaces are directed at the work itself, the work environment, the working community and management, as well as improvement of the employees' skills, resources and health.

In connection with workplace inspections, the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates give instructions on the activities concerning the maintenance of work ability.

Occupational Health Care

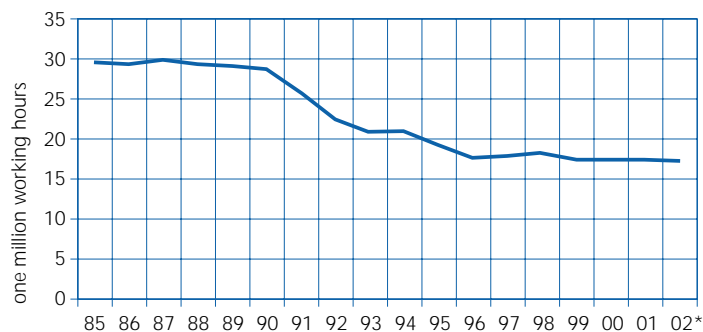
The employer has to arrange the employees' occupational health care services in order to prevent occupational health hazards and develop working conditions.

Occupational health care personnel give reports concerning workplaces and monitor the health of the employees and their working ability by organising health checks and giving workplaces and employees instructions on prevention of risks related to work. In addition to statutory occupational health care, the employer can arrange other health care services for employees.

Occupational health care services have to contribute to the activities which maintain working ability at the workplace.

The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates supervise the arrangement of occupational health care. Monitoring the content of occupational health care services, as regards its medical aspects, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social affairs and Health and the State Provincial Offices.

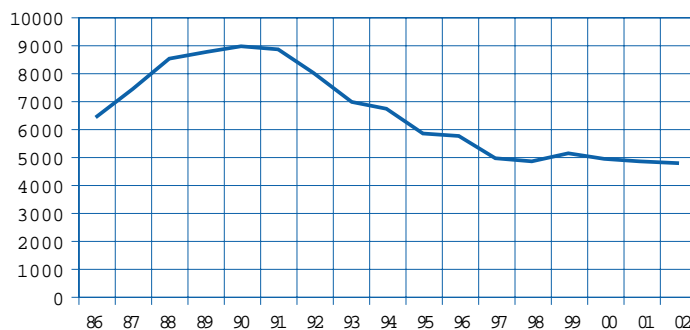
Accidents per Frequency of workplace accidents in 1985–2002



Accidents causing disability for a minimum of 3 days are included.

Source: Statistics Finland
* preliminary data

The trend in the number of occupational diseases in 1986–2002



Source: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

Occupational Safety and Health Administration as the Enforcement Body

The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates and the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are the enforcement authorities of occupational safety and health legislation concerning workplaces. They also give information and advice on good practice in occupational safety and health.

The occupational safety and health authorities have to supervise compliance with approximately 60 regulations. Essential acts are, for example, the Occupational Safety and Health Act and Government Decrees given under it, Working Hours Act, Annual Holidays Act, Employment Contracts Act, Occupational Health Care Act and Act on the Protection of Young Employees.

Occupational safety and health enforcement is directed at the most problematic sectors on the basis of observations, statistics and other information sources. Full attention is also given to the clients' demands.

The objective of the enforcement and instruction carried out by the authorities is to get workplaces to better

evaluate their working conditions and take measures in order to improve them.

Control of Products Used at Work

In the European economic area goods move freely across the national borders. This presupposes that they conform to requirements concerning them.

The Occupational Safety and Health Department and the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates supervise the conformity of machines, equipment, chemical substances and personal protective equipment used at work by means of market surveillance in order to ensure that only safe and conforming products are used at workplaces.

In market surveillance, the Occupational Safety and Health Department co-operates with TUKES, the Safety Technology Authority, the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health and the National Consumer Administration.

International Co-operation

As a member of the United Nations and its International Labour Organisation ILO, Finland has adopted numerous conventions and recommendations concerning occupational safety and health. Their effect on the occupational safety and health of our country has been, and is, of continuous importance.

The majority of occupational safety and health matters are within the competence of the European Community, and its occupational safety and health law is transposed into Finnish legislation.

Experts from the Occupational Safety and Health Department participate in the preparation of occupational safety and health legislation and programmes in the institutions of the European Union. The goal is to achieve a high level of occupational safety and health in all EU countries. It also aims at having Finland's special conditions, such as the cold climate, taken into account in EU legislation.

The Occupational Safety and Health Department participates actively in the development of the European occupational safety and health network. The network has been established in order to gather, analyse and distribute information on occupational safety and health research, legisla-

tion and good practices in order to improve safety at work. The flow of information is developed both between national and international organisations, and from the network directly to employees and employers. The most important channel of communication of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is the Internet. The Finnish home pages are available at www.tyosuojelutietopankki.fi.

Nordic co-operation has an essential role in Finnish occupational safety and health. The agreement on co-operation that entered into force in 1990 contains objectives concerning common test and control procedures, statistics and the continual improvement of working conditions.

The expert committee dealing with the Nordic labour market and occupational safety and health matters supervises permanent working groups and projects, in which Finnish government officials and researchers participate. In recent years co-operation has concentrated on the practical implementation of the EU's occupational safety and health legislation and the support for Russia and the Baltic countries.

The aim of the regional co-operation with Russia and the Baltic countries is to remove social discrepancies.

Players in Occupational Safety and Health in Finland

Occupational Safety and Health Authorities

- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
 - Occupational Safety and Health Department
 - Health Department
 - Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates
- Other authorities
- Ministry of Labour
 - Safety Technology Authority
 - Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority
 - National Consumer Administration
 - National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health

- improvement of working conditions
- regulation
- enforcement

Organisations

- Labour market organisations
 - Centre for Occupational Safety
- agreements
- training
- dissemination of information

Research and Service Institutions

- Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
 - Technical Research Centre of Finland
 - Finnish Standards Association SFS
 - Federation of Accident Insurance Institutions
 - Insurance companies
 - Universities and other institutions of higher education
 - Occupational health care service providers
 - The Finnish Work Environment Fund
- research
- statements
- measurements
- communication
- training
- expert service
- research grants

Workplaces

Employer • Employees

- Occupational Safety and Health Manager
 - Occupational Safety and Health Representative
 - Occupational Safety and Health Committee
- autonomous occupational safety activities
- action programme to promote safety and health
- overall line responsibility
- organising occupational health care services
- activities maintaining working ability

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is in charge of improving the social and health care services and the population's well-being with the help of preventive social and health care policy.

The Ministry not only gives authorities instructions on the operations concerning occupational safety and health matters, but is also in charge of the preparation and enforcement of legislation concerning occupational safety and health, as well as co-ordinates research in the field and carries on international co-operation.

The Occupational Safety and Health Department is responsible for the preparation and development of occupational safety and health legislation and national policy, co-ordination of research and better utilisation of research information. The department also directs the Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates, develops the supervisory methods and ensures their resources.

The development of occupational health care legislation belongs to the Health Department.

Ministry of Labour

The Ministry of Labour promotes the operation of the labour market and work organisations, as well as the integration of immigrants. The Policy Department is in charge of the strategy of the Ministry and concentrates on the preparation of acts, as well as labour and immigration policies. The Labour Market Policy Implementation Department is responsible for the implementation of the labour policy through the Employment and Economic Development Centres.

The Ministry of Labour prepares the essential labour legislation together with the labour market organisations. The acts to be prepared by the Ministry include the Em-

ployment Contracts Act, Act on the Employment of Household Workers, Working Hours Act, Annual Holidays Act, Co-determination in Enterprises Act, Act on Personnel Funds, Act on Personnel Representation in Enterprise, Young Workers' Act, Wage Security Act, Collective Agreements Act, Act on the Labour Council and Act on Mediation in Labour Disputes. Legislation concerning occupational safety and health falls into the domain of the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The Labour Council operating in connection with the Ministry of Labour gives interpretations concerning occupational safety and health legislation on working hours, annual holidays, young employees and safety at work.

The National Workplace Development Programme co-ordinated by the Ministry of Labour supports different workplace projects in order to improve productivity and the quality of working life. The project also creates and maintains co-operation networks disseminating information and experiences and promotes the use of research in the development of working life.

In addition to the Ministry of Labour, the labour market organisations and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health participate in the programme.

Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates

The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates, supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, take care, as authorities, of the practical enforcement of occupational safety and health. The Inspectorates give instructions and advice on applying regulations concerning working conditions, employment and equality and supervise that they are observed in workplaces. The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates also give employees advice on matters concerning occupational safety and health and employment.

The occupational safety and health inspector has the right to visit all workplaces and other places under supervision and to look at the necessary documents as regards occupational safety and health enforcement. The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates can, if necessary, oblige the employer to redress defects in occupational safety and health in the workplace.

The inspector is obligated to secrecy concerning business secrets and employees' health and the possible inspection requests made from the workplace.

Finland is divided into 8 Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates, which operate under the direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The number of personnel in the Inspectorates is about 450, 350 of whom are occupational safety and health inspectors. The Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates supervise approximately 240,000 workplaces, in which almost 30,000 inspections are carried out annually. The inspectors also make statements on the plans concerning working premises and working methods.

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is an expert organisation in the field of occupational safety and health research. The aim of its activities is a healthy employee and a well-functioning workplace. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health pursues this goal with the help of research, expert services, training and information.

The research is concentrated on the employees' health and work ability, features of a good working environment, work-related physical and mental stress, dangers caused by chemical substances, noise, heat and radiation, safe working methods, and occupational accidents and illnesses. About 200 research projects are under way annually.

Experts of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

give instructions on the planning of a good, productive and high-quality working environment. The services include hygienic measurement and analysis services for workplaces, projects on action for maintaining and promoting work ability, risk assessment at workplaces as well as testing people applying for demanding professions, work-related psychological studies, development of workplaces and directions on the establishment of action programmes concerning occupational safety and health.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health organises about 300 courses annually. Training includes continuation and further training that maintains and improves professional skills and is aimed at people working in the field of occupational safety and health.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health gives information on new research projects and up-to-date matters in its own newsletters, guides and other publications. The Institute has the largest information centre on occupational health care, the services of which are available to everybody.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is a public corporation supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Ministry's Health Department co-ordinates the preparation of agreement on the Institute's performance targets.

The number of personnel of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is about 600. In addition to the central institute, there are six regional institutes in Kuopio, Lappeenranta, Oulu, Tampere, Turku and Helsinki.

Centre for Occupational Safety

The Centre for Occupational Safety promotes safety, health and productivity in working conditions and workplaces. Its activities are concentrated on occupational safety and health on a broad basis, occupational health care, productivity and

quality. The key idea is that the best results in development work are achieved in co-operation between management and personnel.

The Centre for Occupational Safety produces and disseminates information and knowledge needed in developing working conditions. The modes of operation are:

- **training**
about 200 basic, continuation and special courses and bulletins annually
- **services for workplaces**
designed for workplace-specific development and training according to special needs
- **publications**
general guides focusing on diverse branches and issues, information leaflets, training packs, slide series, training videos
- **information**
e.g. Työyhteisö – Arbetsplatsinfo, a periodical published four times a year
- **advice and information service**
advice, information retrieval and investigation according to the clients' needs
- **keeping of a personnel register**
contact information on about 65,000 persons in occupational safety and health duties and occupational health care services in private and municipal workplaces.

In its activities the Centre for Occupational Safety follows the principles of sustainable development. Its strengths are wide co-operation, expert knowledge, client orientation and inexpensive products and services.

The Centre for Occupational Safety is an office governed by the central labour market organisations. It acts in close co-operation with the employer and employee organi-

sations of the manufacturing industries, service sector and municipalities representing the different fields of activities. Its operations are funded by grants from the Work Environment Fund and income from the training and information services.

The Finnish Work Environment Fund

The Finnish Work Environment Fund was established in 1979. The labour market organisations are represented in its administration and the operation is supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The funds originate from the employers' accident insurance premiums.

The Finnish Work Environment Fund finances research, development and information aiming at improving the working environment and promoting the safety and productivity of workplaces. Additionally, the fund finances the operation of the Centre for Occupational Safety.

The financing areas are the work environment, industrial relations and productivity of the work. Finance is granted in the forms of research and development allocations, information and training allocations, development aid, as well as personal grants.

The allocations are meant to be used for research and development projects concerning working life and the work environment, as well as to disseminate the research results to the users. With the development aid, the fund supports the introduction of the research and development results of the field into the applicant's workplace with the help of an external expert.

A private person can get a grant in order to finish a licentiate's or doctor's thesis concerning working life, for continuation and further training necessary in the development of working life, or the presentation of research findings in an international meeting.

VTT, the Technical Research Centre of Finland

VTT is an independent expert organisation which provides comprehensive technology and research services for both domestic and international clients, private companies and the public sector. VTT aims at increasing the well-being of its owner, Finnish society, and through its technological know-how improving its clients' technical-economic competitiveness. VTT operates under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Its personnel amounts to 2,800. The extent of VTT's occupational safety and health research is approximately 50 man-years, the extent of all safety research being about 200 man-years.

Research and development promoting occupational safety and health is often carried out as a part of other technological development aimed at higher competitiveness, quality and productivity.

STTV, the National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health

The National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health controls social and health hazards caused by products containing alcohol, tobacco and chemicals, and ensures compliance with the regulations concerning the products. STTV is supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The Chemicals Department of STTV is responsible for the prevention and control of health hazards caused by chemicals.

STTV's tasks within chemical control are mainly based on Community legislation. The operation includes assessment of the risks and acceptability of chemicals and pesticides, matters concerning classification and labelling, market surveillance and monitoring GLP laboratories.

The Product Register Unit maintains a product register included in the chemical register. It contains information on dangerous chemicals on the Finnish market. The register is in use by the Chemicals Act enforcement authorities.

The National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health employs 71 persons, 22 of whom work in the Chemicals Department and 12 in the Product Register Unit. STTV co-operates with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, The Finnish Environmental Institute, Plant Production Inspection Centre and National Agency for Medicines.

TUKES, the Safety Technology Authority

TUKES is an expert organisation that supervises and develops technical safety and reliability. Its control operations are concentrated on chemical and process safety, pressure equipment safety, electrical safety, rescue equipment, measuring instruments and articles of precious metals.

The aim of TUKES is to protect people, property and the environment from safety risks and to promote technical reliability. The supervisory tasks are organised into two units: plant and installations surveillance (installations and technical services) and product safety enforcement (products and measurements).

Besides supervisory tasks, TUKES participates in national and international co-operation, development of legislation, and different research and development projects. Also, it actively gives information on matters concerning technical safety and reliability.

TUKES operates mainly in the sector of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, but it has tasks in the sectors of various other ministries as well.

STUK, the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority

STUK is the authority and expert organisation that supervises radiation and nuclear safety. It operates in the field of radiation instruments, radioactive substances, nuclear power plants, nuclear materials and nuclear waste. STUK's main task is to protect people, society, the environment and future generations from the adverse effects of radiation.

STUK also controls natural radioactive substances in working, housing and living environments and exposure to radiation caused by them, as well as exposure to non-ionising radiation as far as it is not the task of other authorities.

Legislation contains provisions on the monitoring and maximum values of employees' exposure to radiation, and on their health controls. The information on exposure is registered in a dose register maintained by STUK.

STUK monitors the radiation exposure of about 11,000 employees as well as gives instructions on safety and provides training for employees using radiation.

STUK sets the national measurement norms. Thus it ensures that radiation measurements made in Finland are adequately precise and internationally comparable.

STUK provides national customers services in radiation dose measurements, radioactivity counts and other expert services. Expert services abroad are mainly ordered by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union.

An essential part of STUK's operations are research, radiation control of the environment and emergency readiness operations. Research results are published in scientific journals and other publications and the publication series of the Authority. STUK informs about new research projects in its magazine *Alara* and its Internet home pages, brochures and guides.

STUK employs 300 persons.

National Consumer Administration

The task of the National Consumer Administration is to ensure the economic, health and legal status of the consumers and to promote consumers' opportunities to participate in private and public decision making and in the market.

In co-operation with the State Provincial Offices and the municipal health inspectors, the National Consumer Administration is responsible for the safety of consumer goods and services. By means of market surveillance carried out through spot checks it ensures that the consumer goods and services are safe.

The variety of control methods guarantees the effectiveness of market surveillance. These methods include studies on the safety of products, testing samples from market surveillance with the Customs Laboratory, dealing with complaints and notifications and market surveillance projects with the municipal supervisory authorities.

If a product is found to be dangerous or defective as regards safety, the National Consumer Administration tries to negotiate with the entrepreneur in order to rectify the defects or stop the sale of the product. The National Consumer Administration can also determine a ban on sales and reinforce it with conditional imposition of a fine and impose a so-called return procedure in order to remove the dangerous goods from the market.

The main product groups to be controlled are personal protective equipment, toys and children's accessories, textiles, cosmetics, sports and leisure equipment, as well as different consumer services such as fitness centres, amusement parks, skiing slopes, playgrounds etc.

The Product Safety Act is of a secondary nature; it is not applied to products covered by special legislation (like medicines and foodstuffs). Special authorities guarantee their control.

Market surveillance is completed with information directed at the consumers and entrepreneurs. In addition, the State Provincial Offices carry out their own market controls according to the agreements on performance targets signed with the National Consumer Administration.

The State Provincial Offices and the municipal health inspectors are permitted to carry out inspections at sale points, as well as at the storehouses of the producers and importers.

TVL, the Federation of Accident Insurance Institutions

The Federation of Accident Insurance Institutions takes care of tasks requiring co-operation between the insurance institutions carrying on statutory accident insurance business and other tasks as is provided by law. It also carries out the tasks of the insurance institution of the employee's place of residence following from the international agreement signed by Finland.

The central areas of the Federation are conformity in the application of the system, profitability of the statutory accident insurance, production of information on occupational safety and health, effects of the European insurance market on the statutory accident insurance and information on the contents of the statutory accident insurance.

The investigation of fatal occupational injuries carried out by TVL is directed by an investigation board with representatives of the central labour market organisations, insurance companies and the Centre for Occupational Safety. All

fatal occupational injuries have been investigated since 1985. Fatalities among entrepreneurs and other self-employed persons have been reported since 1998. There are 30 to 40 fatalities annually. At the end of 2003 their total number was 676.

The investigation reports on fatal occupational accidents are submitted to the occupational safety and health contact persons of the workplaces and to other experts. The reports are based on visits by the sector investigation group to the workplace and the documents made by the occupational safety and health authorities, as well as the police. Sector analyses and summaries are made on the basis of the reports at regular intervals.

An occupational safety and health committee, with representation of the labour market organisations and the insurance sector, directs TVL's occupational safety and health activities. The committee co-ordinates the occupational safety work in the insurance sector. It also takes initiatives as to the needs for statistical changes as well as research and investigations that are based on the statistics of occupational accidents and illnesses produced by TVL (SAMMIO statistics).

In the Working Environment Medals Decree, TVL has been assigned the task of the secretariat of the Working Environment Medal Committee, including dissemination of information on medals and their winners, contacts with the applicants and winners of the medals, and the preparations of the event where the annual medal for special merits is given. The committee also makes a proposal on medals for special merits to the minister in charge of occupational safety and health matters.

Contact information

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European Agency for Safety and Health at Work Focal Point in Finland

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH INSPECTORATES

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