Managing Occupational Health

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HM Principal Specialist Inspector
Occupational Health
Nothing New?

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
Occupational Health

The protection and promotion of the health of workers by preventing and controlling:

- Occupational diseases and accidents and by eliminating occupational factors and conditions hazardous to health and safety at work.

- The development and promotion of healthy and safe work environments and work organisations.

(based on WHO, 1994)
The effect of work on health and health on work
Occupational Health/Health Work and Well-being

- Ill health caused by work
- Effects of ill health on health and safety of individual and others
- Positive benefits of ‘good’ employment
- The workplace as a venue for health checks
- Health promotion in the workplace
The scale of the problem

- **2.1 million** people suffering from an illness they believed was caused or made worse by work
- **1.3 million** of these cases were suffered by people working during the year, of which **563,000** were new cases
- Working days lost
  - **28 million** due to work-related ill-health
  - **6 million** to workplace injury

2007/08
Occupational Health

• OH should be part of the **Risk Management System**

• **OH should not** be an add on or a luxury

• Nor should it consist purely of Health Promotion (lifestyle issues)
Organisation Management

Health & Safety Team
Liaise with management and H&S as part of the Risk management process to identify health hazards, evaluate risks & implement control measures

Monitoring & Maintenance of Control Measures/ suitability of PPE/RPE

Education & Training

Health Assessment, health monitoring & health surveillance
Includes Statutory/non statutory surveillance/fitness for work – pre-employment task & ongoing assessment. Reports back surveillance results as per COSHH/Management Regs (including non-attendees to HR) Reassess unsatisfactory results refer to OHP/agreed protocol Investigate with H&S

Occupational Health Team
Liaise with management and H&S as part of the Risk management process to identify health hazards, evaluate risks & implement control measures

Recruitment
Fitness for work referrals to OH Job description/task description appointment diary for OH recall system for surveillance Maintains statutory health records

Human Resources Team
Responsible for all personnel issues & financial risk management. Introduces company policies with advice/assistance from H&S and OH

Attendance Management
Policies Rehabilitation/sickness absence Sickness absence analysis Protocols for referral

Financial Personnel issues

Employees
Employee representatives/ GPs/ Consultants

Line Managers

Respiratory
Noise/vibration
FLT/Driver
Nightworkers
Skin
Pre-employment
Fitness for work
Rehabilitation
Occupational Health Policy

• Define the reason for the policy

• Include the definition of and the roles and responsibilities of occupational health within the company

• Include procedures for making an appointment with occupational health

• Include the role/responsibilities of the manager and employee

• Include a policy review date
Competency

- **Doctors**: should hold the D.Occ.Med qualification as a minimum

- **Nurses**: should be registered as a specialist nurse practitioner in public health (Occupational Health)

- **Occupational Health Technicians**: should be trained in the specific elements of the service they deliver, and must be clinically supervised.
Main Hazards

- Moving & Handling
- Noise
- Vibration
- Chemicals
- Dust
Why Health Surveillance?

• To identify any disease at an early stage

• To help prevent disease progression and disability

• To check the effectiveness of the employer’s control measures
Health Surveillance?

• The starting point is the risk assessment which should have highlighted health hazards within the workplace, identified who is at risk and taken measures to control the risk.

• If residual risks remain, further steps are needed, one of which may be health surveillance.

• Health surveillance is about systematically watching out for early signs of work-related ill health in employees exposed to certain health risks.
Health Surveillance

Some aspects of health surveillance also require additional competences to be demonstrated e.g.

• HAVS: a Faculty of Occupational Medicine approved training course in HAVS or equivalent level of competency

• Noise induced hearing loss: a British Society for Audiology approved course for industrial audiometricians or equivalent level of competency.

• Respiratory: Association for Respiratory Technology and Physiology (ARTP) diploma or equivalent level of competency.
What causes musculoskeletal disorders?

They are problems affecting muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and other soft tissues / joints.

Handling, pushing & pulling, repetitive actions, bad posture.
Manual handling – reducing the risk

- Challenge existing work practices and materials;
- Make better use of lifting aids, hoists and conveyors;
- Train project managers, supervisors and workers;
- Active case management- ‘Take pain killers; keep active; get back to work’
Manual handling – reducing the risk

• Challenge existing work practices and materials;
• Make better use of lifting aids, hoists and conveyors;
• Train project managers, supervisors and site workers;
• Active case management by OH & HR – ‘Take pain killers; keep active; get back to work’
Health Monitoring for Musculo-Skeletal Disorders

• A musculo-skeletal questionnaire can be completed annually and returned to the occupational health provider.

• A responsible person can be trained so that employees can report any musculoskeletal symptoms.

• Any employees identified with or reporting problems must then be referred to an Occupational Health practitioner.

• It is recommended that a statement of fitness advised on restrictions
Noise

• Too much noise exposure, whatever the sources can result in hearing damage which is irreversible.

• Exposure to loud noise, even for a short time, can cause a temporary loss of hearing

• Repeated exposure to loud noise can result in permanent damage
The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005

• There are two main **action levels** for continuous noise:

• **The lower exposure action value - 80 dB (daily or weekly personal noise exposure),**
  – provide information and training and make hearing protection available.

• **The upper exposure action value 85 dB (daily or weekly personal noise exposure),**
  – reduce noise exposure, such as engineering controls or other technical measures.
  – hearing protection **MUST** be used if the noise cannot be controlled by these measures, or while these measures are being planned or carried out.
Noise

- Avoid noisy processes
- Segregate by time or distance
- Ensure silencers and covers are fitted and maintained
- Provide appropriate hearing protection
- Ensure hearing protection is worn when needed
Vibration

• The effects start in fingers but damage is progressive and irreversible - can extend to hands, arms, shoulders and neck

• Symptoms:
  – Tingling and numbness
  – Blanching then painful flushing
  – Loss of strength
Vibration

• Regular long term exposure to hand-arm vibration (HAV) disrupts blood circulation
  – Vascular
  – Neurological
  – Musculoskeletal
• Painful and disabling
HAVS
Points and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005

Exposure Action Value is 2.5m/s² A(8) or 100 points per day
- Reduce alarp
- Provide training
- Provide health surveillance

Exposure Limit Value is 5.0 m/s² A(8) or 400 points per day

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Health surveillance for HAVS

• Workers exposed to greater than the action value (100 points)
• Tiered approach
• Top tier is a self administered questionnaire
• Referrals to competent person (e.g. qualified occupational health nurse)
Dermatitis

Substances which can cause dermatitis include:

» Solvents
» Adhesives
» Inks
Dermatitis

- Use less corrosive, irritant, non-sensitising materials
- Use contained handling systems
- Ensure early installation of welfare facilities
- Introduce a Skincare programme to include:
  - Education training, handcare, appropriate gloves and hand care etc
Dermatitis - controls

Good welfare is crucial:

• Hot and cold running water

• Sinks big enough to wash forearms to elbow

• Suitable soap and means of drying
Occupational Health

Any Questions?