



Arpel 2009 Conference
Environment, Health and Safety Committee
“Health Risk Management”
Interdisciplinary activity supported by Top Management

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The Context



The risks to the health of our workers and contractors entail very distinctive labor and medical issues to consider:

- 1. Assessment of the risks to which the workers are exposed in each position. (Industrial Hygiene)**
- 2. Periodic clinical y medical studies to verify that the levels of exposure to risk agents do not affect their health. (Occupational Medicine)**
- 3. Monitoring of agents not related to work acting on the health, and application of preventive actions to mitigate them. (Occupational Medicine and Industrial Hygiene)**
- 4. Applicable national laws (Legal)**

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Objectives



An action plan in occupational medicine should include the commitment of the Top Management of the Company.

The scope of the action plan should include:

1. Interdisciplinary work with a clearly defined coordinator.
2. Continuous updating of survey of risks and actions designed to reduce the exposure to risks.
3. Legal update
4. Periodic controls of potential causes not related to work that affect health. .

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1- Risk Assessment (Industrial Hygiene)



Assessment of risks in different work positions and action plans:

- Each position should be evaluated under routine, unusual and emergency activities.
- The levels of exposure should be determined by means of measurements, following methodologies defined by the laws, with reference to international or corporate standards.
- A database with continuous updates of the risks to which workers are exposed is required.
- Once the risks have been defined, it is necessary to evaluate if it is possible to make improvements to facilities and processes.
- Make an action plan with compliance deadlines and subsequent evaluation of their effectiveness.

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2 - Periodic medical and clinical studies



These studies are the main activity of occupational medicine, as follows:

- Permanent interrelation with the results of risk assessments, as a way to add or remove studies from annual programs.
- The results are confidential and strictly medical, but a way to transmit the information must be defined so that the Industrial Hygiene sector can act in case of non-compliance or problems with health.
- They may define changes in the activities performed by workers.
- The medical studies have to evaluate if factors not related to work are not causing adverse effects to health, as a way not to generate errors in the actions to be taken.
- The legislation may establish limitations to the studies to perform to workers, and this must be taken into account to avoid future complaints.

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3 - Monitoring of agents not related to work



These factors are increasingly affecting health. The following are some guidelines to work on them:

- As they are part of the privacy of the workers, they must be treated with the greatest care.
- The definition of an alcohol and drugs policy signed by Top Management must establish the guidelines to work on this issue.
- Physicians have to find the way to exchange information with the Industrial Hygiene sector when they consider that agents not related to work may produce accidents or deteriorate work performance.
- The Legal Department may be a decisive support when defining changes in the staff affected or the possibility to perform specific medical studies and tests.
- Agreements with the unions may help implement preventive campaigns and addictions rehabilitation programs.

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4 - Applicable national laws



Each country has particular provisions and defines part of the possibilities of action by the Companies:

- There are countries with more permissive legislations and others that strongly limit the possibility to perform tests and monitor conditions not related to work.
- When there are many limitations, special care should be taken in order to be able to take appropriate action.
- Blood tests to determine illicit drugs, blood alcohol samplings, HIV controls are some points that should be agreed between the medical service and the Legal Sector in order to avoid any legal breach.
- Health Risk Management must include followups and updates of the laws

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Conclusions



- Health risk management is an interdisciplinary activity and therefore difficult to implement.
- Factors not related to work, such as drug abuse (legal and illegal drugs), excessive consumption of alcohol and stress must be part of the health risk management and must be incorporated into action plans.
- Multinational companies might have extra difficulties to adapt to the legal requirements of the different countries.
- The health of the workers should be a priority, at the same level as safety and environmental care.

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Thank you for your attention. I will be glad to answer any questions.

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