

# OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

## Information and instructions

### IMPORTANT

Effective protection of health and safety at work can only be achieved through cooperation of all those involved. In order for workers to actively contribute to reducing or eliminating risks and stress factors, they have to be sufficiently informed and instructed.

### INFORMATION

Workers must be informed of safety risks and health protection as well as of risk prevention measures.

### NOTE

The aim of information is to make workers aware of existing risks, and to familiarise them with and make them aware of the need for available options to eliminate or reduce those risks. Providing workers with information thus plays a key role.

Where required by the risk situation, employers must provide information to individual workers. In areas where only little hazard exists, it is sufficient for employers to inform the safety representative or the works council. Those workers' representatives will then pass the information on to the workers. Where no safety representative or works council exists, employers must always inform every worker.

**Special obligations to provide information exist in the following areas:**

- Appointment of safety representatives
- Health surveillance
- Labelling of health and safety risks
- Agents
- Workplaces
- Work with display screen equipment
- Work equipment
- Limit values (Maximum Workplace Concentration, MAK; Technical Approximate Concentration, TRK)
- Explosive atmospheres
- Blasting
- Noise and vibrations
- Personal protective equipment
- Handling loads
- Preventive services

### NOTE

The obligation to provide information arises also where work is performed by employees of third-party undertakings or by hired-out workers (temporary agency work).

### Provision of information

Information must initially be provided before commencement of the work.

Information must be in a form that workers are able to understand. Employers have to make sure that workers have understood the information, especially workers who speak another language.

### Information documents

In some areas, providing information orally is inadequate or inappropriate. In the place of or in addition to oral information, workers may be provided with suitable documents.

### NOTE

Appropriately prepared documents can reduce communication issues.

Workers must always be provided with operating instructions, package insert texts and safety data sheets.

### INSTRUCTIONS

In the same way as the information provided to workers, adequate and clear instructions are a key prerequisite to ensuring health and safety at work.

The obligation to instruct workers applies regardless of whether there are safety representatives or a works council at the workplace.

### NOTE

All workers are required to be instructed and not only workers' representatives!  
The instructions must cover all safety and health issues that are relevant to the workers affected.

The scope and content of instruction will depend on what hazards exist as well as on the workers' levels of training and experience.  
The instructions must specifically address the workers' workplace and the range of tasks they perform.

The instructions must not be related only to 'normal operations' but must also include maintenance, cleaning, foreseeable interruptions in operations, conduct in the event of fire, etc.

**Special obligations to provide instructions exist in the following areas:**

- Access to hazardous areas
- Work equipment, agents
- Handling loads
- Personal protective equipment
- Construction works
- Labelling of health and safety risks
- Work with display screen equipment
- Explosive atmospheres
- Noise and vibrations

**NOTE**

The obligation to provide instructions arises also where work is performed by employees of third-party undertakings or by hired-out workers (temporary agency work).

**PROVISION OF INSTRUCTIONS**

Instructions must always be provided before commencement of the work

- When workers are transferred or the range of tasks changes
- When new agents are introduced
- When work procedures are introduced or modified
- Following accidents or incidents nearly resulting in an accident

Instructions must be repeated in regular intervals where necessary.

**The following rules apply to instructions in every case:**

- Instructions must be provided during working time
- There must be evidence of providing instructions (records must be kept, e.g. minutes of the instruction session along with a list of participants)
- Instructions may be provided by employers if they have the necessary knowledge, or by qualified workers or qualified persons from other organisations.
- Instructions must be adapted to the workers' level of experience and be provided in a form they understand.

The works council and the safety representatives are to be involved in planning and organising the instruction sessions.

Where there are no workers' representatives, all workers are to be involved.

The occupational health and safety officers and occupational physicians are to be involved in organising the instruction sessions and preparing operating instructions.

**Written instructions**

Instructions may also be provided in written form. Written instructions are similarly required to be adapted to the worker's level of experience.

Written instructions or operating instructions must be provided to the workers where necessary. As part of workplace evaluation, the workplaces and tasks requiring written instructions are to be determined.

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The competent Labour Inspectorate will be happy to advise you

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