



CAR Master training

CONTENT UNIT 9

HEALTH PROMOTION AND RISK PREVENTION



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9 Health promotion and risk prevention

9.1 The introduction

The topic

Excessively long working hours, permanently poor posture at the workplace, inadequate protective clothing or even stress and overwork are just some of the factors that impair general well-being at work. The negative consequences for physical and mental health should not be underestimated. To protect employees, every company's central task is to ensure safe and healthy working conditions. Rule number one is to avoid dangerous or unhealthy factors in advance so that mental and physical stress does not occur in the first place. If this fails, you as managers have various methods and measures at your disposal to help you deal with these situations.

At the end of the unit, you should have the following knowledge:

- You can list work-related factors that influence an employee's health
- You can describe how these factors influence an employee's health
- You can describe the basic principles of ergonomics.
- You know about health-promoting behaviours
- You can understand what mental stress is.
- You know the most important characteristics of different psychological stresses such as burnout or depression.
- You know the possibilities and limits in dealing with affected employees.
- You can describe EU legislation on health and safety at work.
- You know methods to detect hazards in the company.
- You can describe measures that result from this.

9.2 A healthy workplace

"Health is our greatest asset" - this saying accompanies us in all areas of everyday life, as well as in our everyday working life. Most of us spend around 8 hours a day at work (for a full-time job). The workplace is our second home, so to speak. It is especially important that our work is healthy and safe. This is why we are taking a detailed look at all the factors that determine a healthy workplace.

And above all, you - as a master craftsman - can help to ensure that your employees have a healthy workplace.

Have you ever wondered what the definition of "work" is?

Definition

Work is defined as all those external factors that have an impact on workers.



The following factors influence our work:

- work equipment
- working materials
- working environment
- working hours
- work processes
- work climate

All these factors have an impact on our health and well-being. So there are also some things to consider here. Thus, we will now look at each of the factors mentioned above in the following:

Working equipment

The term "work equipment" refers to all machines, devices, and tools that you need for your work. This also includes means of transport (e.g., lifts, industrial trucks) as well as scaffolding, ladders or containers.

Important

A very important requirement regarding work equipment is that only work equipment that poses as little risk to health and safety as possible according to the current state of the art may be used. This means that no outdated equipment may be used if it no longer meets safety standards.

Work equipment must also be regularly maintained and checked for safety. You can think of this as the "annual inspection" of your car. Here, too, a regular check of safety and roadworthiness is obligatory!

It is also important that no defective work equipment is used. Work equipment must not be used for purposes other than those for which it was intended and for which it was not approved.

Hint

A detailed description of occupational health and safety regulations for work equipment can be found in national labour laws. Here you can read about the regulations that apply to your country.

Working materials

Working materials are **chemical substances and mixtures** that are used at work. Use means, among other things, **the production, processing, storage and disposal** of these substances. Working materials can be solid, liquid or gaseous.

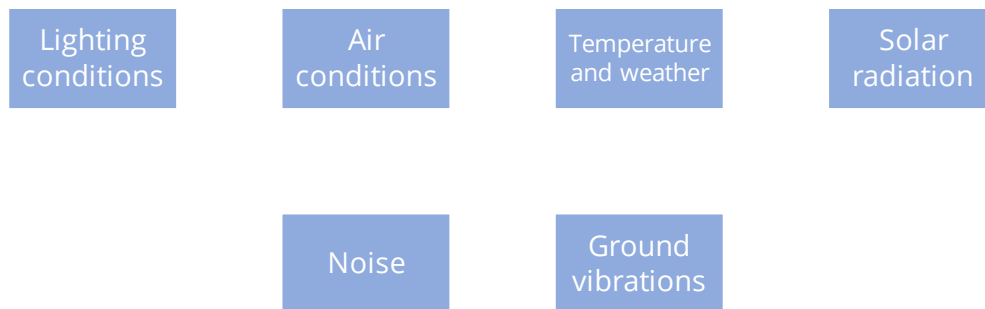
Working materials are a very important topic in health protection since many occupational fields involve working with **toxic, explosive, or highly flammable** working materials. There is a higher risk of accidents in these areas. Accordingly, specific safety regulations must be strictly observed. These safety regulations include:

- obligation to report and document (the employee must keep records of who in the company has been working with hazardous substances and for how long).
- labelling obligation (affix warning signs)
- special training
- protective precautions (also during storage!) and personal protective equipment

Working environment

The working environment means the physical environment when working. It can be anything from a desk in an office to working in a factory or outside on a construction site.

Many different factors play a role in the working environment. These all have an impact on our well-being and health. Here is a brief overview of a few of the most important factors:



With all these influencing factors, you as a master should make sure that the persons employed are not exposed to extreme conditions and that negative health effects are prevented as far as possible. This can be achieved by technical means and constructions (e.g. installation of a ventilation system, mechanical light protection, additional lighting, air conditioning) or by personal protective equipment (e.g. ear protection, waterproof work clothing, cold protective clothing). If the negative factors of influence cannot be sufficiently mitigated in this way, then the employer must at least order sufficient rest breaks.

Working hours



Working hours also have an impact on our health. Working too long leads to physical exhaustion and a decline in the ability to concentrate. This leads to reduced

performance, carelessness, and a higher risk of accidents. This is why there are legal limits on working hours in every country.

It is in the interest of both - the employer and the employees - that overexertion and fatigue at work are avoided. This is part of workplace safety.

Example

How to cope with working long hours:

- Make a precise schedule
- "Automate" what you can
- Track time to avoid distractions
- Listen to your internal clock
- Trick your mind with productive rewards
- Take breaks
- Ask for help
- Find inspiration in others
- Learn how to disconnect

Work process

The work processes are the actions and processes that are carried out at work. Here, the employer must ensure that the work processes do not endanger the safety and health of the persons employed or that negative effects are mitigated.

Unfavourable postures (i.e. for example crooked or squeezed) and one-sided strain on the musculature and skeleton must be avoided. These can lead to acute muscle tension and circulation problems. But long-term damage due to incorrect posture, one-sided wear and tear and damage to the musculoskeletal system (e.g. slipped discs) can also be the result.

Psychological factors must also be taken into account when designing work processes.

Practical Relevance

Did you know that monotonous work puts a strain on the psyche? If you always do the same thing every day, your ability to concentrate and your memory suffer. You get tired more quickly, feel bored and your enjoyment of work diminishes. This can be counteracted in companies by having employees regularly take turns at certain work processes.

Another psychological factor is time pressure. Here it is important to ensure that people are not exposed to unnecessary time stress or can take regular breaks. Piecework (where people are not paid according to working time, but for example according to the number of pieces) is considered to be particularly psychologically stressful. Cycle work ("assembly line work") is also not ideal. Care must be taken that the time intervals are not too short so that the people working do not get into a whirl.

Working atmosphere

The working atmosphere is about the interpersonal atmosphere among colleagues. But it is also about the relationship between the employer and his employees.

It is now well known in occupational psychology that a **bad working atmosphere makes people ill in the long run**. When employees are humiliated, deliberately over- or under-challenged or socially isolated, or when there is harassment, abuse of power or physical violence, this can lead to serious psychological and physical problems. Examples include loss of enjoyment of work, depression, burnout, addiction, anxiety or even suicidal thoughts.

When it comes to the working atmosphere, the attitude to work and free time lived in the company also play a role. For example, does the boss demand that her employees be available for her around the clock? Or is it respected that people also need time to switch off?

Example

How to create a positive working atmosphere in the company:

- Give your employees a real voice
- Show appreciation every day
- Focus on the workplace itself
- Turn your values into more than just words
- Create an environment of psychological safety and trust
- Empower your team with what they need to succeed

Example

How to solve problems before they appeared:

- Effective communication
- ask for feedback
- Create New Solutions
- Encourage Collaboration
- Consider Hypotheticals
- Track Progress

9.3 Ergonomics in the workplace

The rising average age of employees, the increased incidence of musculoskeletal disorders, but also current legal requirements are new challenges that a company must overcome. A central measure is to create ergonomic working conditions, i.e. to adapt working conditions to people and not vice versa. Ergonomics means nothing other than the design of effective interaction between people and technology.

Definition

Ergonomics is the science that deals with the design of the working environment in a human-machine system. Its aim is to optimize workers' efficiency, health, well-being and safety.

Example

Pay attention to accidents is to monitor accidents related to ergonomics that have happened in the company in the last years to implement specific preventive measures in all areas:

Low back pain in assembly lines can be reduced by incorporating belts in tasks requiring more effort.

Previous warm-up of those muscles that are going to do repetitive movements.

The optimization of the workplace has a double advantage: the health of your workers is protected, and you can prevent sick leave and occupational disability.



Let's look at the goals of ergonomics in detail:

- Increase the efficiency of the workforce
- Minimize the risk of accidents
- Minimize the risk of long-term health limitations such as musculoskeletal disorders
- Facilitate work processes
- Promote physical and mental health

Holt aims best maintains or promote the health of your workforce and prevent negative health consequences. There are different ways to do this, which refer to technical and organizational as well as personal measures.

Technical measures	Organisational measures	Personal measures
Lifting aids	Increase in staff for an activity	Training and further education (e.g.: on correct lifting and carrying of loads)
Height adjustable workstations	Sharing heavy loads among several employees	Use of exoskeletons to support the body
Use of vibration-damping elements in machines to prevent vibrations	Variety of activities so that there is no one-sided strain	Increase risk awareness of the workforce
Individually adjustable lighting systems to guarantee optimal lighting conditions (without reflection or shadow)	Ensure regular breaks, especially during hazardous activities.	Suitable work clothing

9.4 Mental health

You probably know it too: Some days you hardly know which thing to start with first, then you try to do all the tasks at the same time and finally go home completely exhausted at the end of the working day. If this happens from time to time, our body and psyche manage to recover. But if this is the permanent state, then all the warning lights should already be flashing red! Because then there is a danger that the mental stress will affect our mental health.

But what exactly do we mean by mental stress? What can we include and how do they arise?

Definition

Psychological stress refers to all external influences that have a psychological impact on a person. Psychological stress, therefore, does not come from within, but from the environment. In concrete terms, this means for the workplace: All effects of the working conditions that influence emotional or cognitive processes constitute mental stress. (E.g.: working conditions, communication or information).

Example

Define the tasks, roles and workloads for each person to avoid psychological stress

Establish mechanisms so workers can suggest and comment to improve the work in the workplace and avoid this kind of situation.

Establish a training plan that includes technical aspects and soft skills (teamwork, management of emotions ...)

Facilitate stress management mechanisms as training.

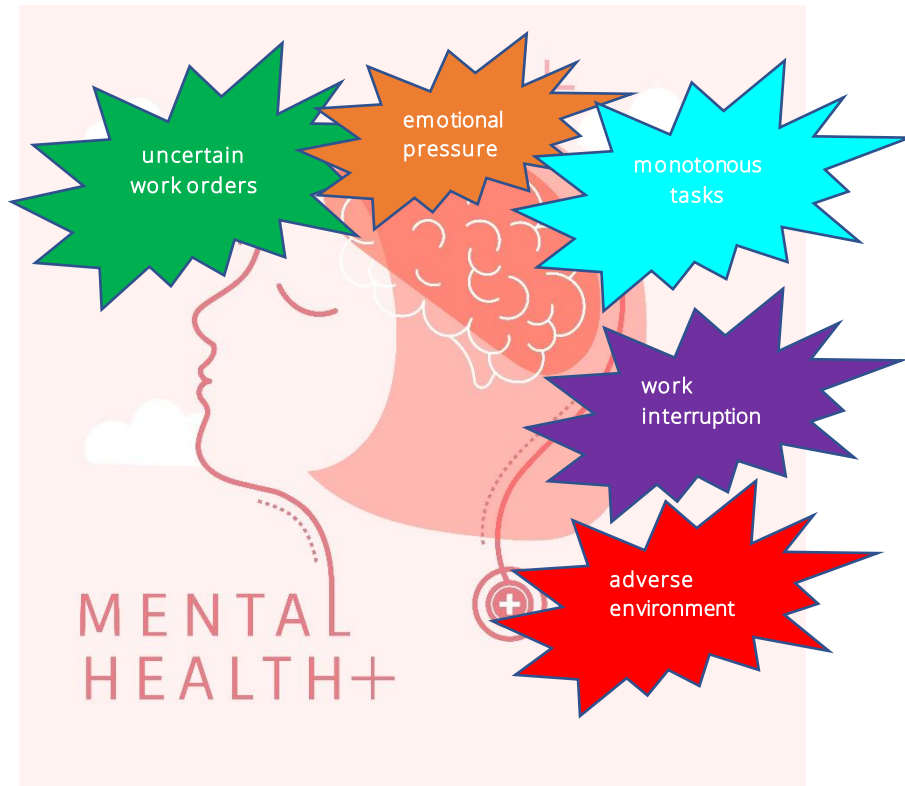
Implement ethical codes in companies that facilitate a healthy coexistence environment.

Establish protocols to avoid bullying and violence, especially for those workers who are in contact with difficult clients.

Psychological stress in the workplace can be, among other things:

- Regular uncontrollable work interruptions (e.g.: occurrence of malfunctions, blocking of the machine)
- Emotional pressure (e.g. complaints from customers)

- Unclear work assignments
- Monotonous work tasks
- Unfavourable environmental conditions (noise, poor lighting conditions, heat)



One of the best-known consequences of too much mental stress is burnout syndrome. Contrary to what is often assumed, burnout is not a temporary condition that can be cured by taking a holiday. But burnout is also not synonymous with depression. So what does the term actually mean?

Definition

Burnout is a permanent emotional, mental and physical exhaustion. It is often accompanied by sleep disturbances, listlessness, constant fatigue, depression and low performance.

But how does it get so far? What are the causes of burnout?

Burnout often arises due to persistent stress at work or at home that can no longer be coped with. Risk factors at the workplace are above all:

- Deficits about the design of work content
- Deficits in the organisation of work (e.g.: too high a workload or long working hours)
- Deficits in shaping social processes (e.g., insufficient recognition)

All these factors increase the risk of feeling burnt out.

Example

Encourage emotional boundary setting and communication:

- Communication is always the key, especially when setting emotional boundaries. The topics that energize some employees might stress others, so it's essential to set boundaries and talk about issues as soon as they happen.
- Create a safe space for employees to discuss complex topics and set boundaries. Specific issues can be incredibly emotional for some employees. Avoiding those problems will prevent burnout and strengthen team relationships.

Foster social interaction:

- Community is a pillar of retention. It strengthens culture by connecting employees to their peers and work, naturally reducing burnout and other cultural issues. Social interaction between employees can minimize stress and improve workplace culture, but managers must ensure that every employee is included.

Ignoring employee burnout is one of the riskiest things a business can do. That's why preparation is arguably the critical strategy for preventing burnout. Understanding the warning signs of burnout and the signs of engaged employees will help managers notice when employees start to struggle. Additionally, a burnout prevention plan is one of the most effective employee retention strategies.

Often difficult to distinguish from burnout is depression, which is another form of psychological stress.

Definition

Depression is a serious mental illness. Those affected feel depressed, exhausted and listless. This is not a one-off dejection, but the symptoms occur over a period of at least two weeks.

The most common symptoms of depression are as follows:

- depressed, depressive and/or depressed mood
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Lack of drive
- Fatigability

In addition, there are often other complaints such as:

- Concentration and attention disorders
- The loss of self-confidence
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia

Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, digestive problems, weight loss or dizziness are also not uncommon.

Finally, we want to take a closer look at a third physical stress disorder. Namely, plain and simple: stress.

We all have stress from time to time, you might think. And it's true: To a certain extent, our body and psyche can cope with it. However, if the stress gets too high, it can have serious physical and mental consequences. Let's first take a look at the term stress, which we all know from our daily lives, from a scientific perspective:

Definition

Stress refers to a condition that is perceived as unpleasant, threatening, inescapable and critical. A feeling of stress occurs primarily when a person feels that he or she can no longer cope with a task.

Example

Availability of opportunities for stress recovery and mental recharge such as having quiet rooms on-site to rest in, as well as breaks from work including vacation days, work-free weekends, and real lunch breaks, is found to be associated with positive mood, less fatigue and a decrease in employee burnout.

Here, too, the consequences are manifold:

- Restriction of physical and mental well-being (e.g.: irritability, fatigue, nervousness).
- Anxiety
- Stomach pain
- High blood pressure
- Increased risk of heart attack
- Lower performance

What can you as a production manager actively do if you notice that one of your employees is suffering from the above-mentioned symptoms? What possibilities do you have yourself and when do you need help from outside?

Of course, the best thing would be to avoid mental overload from the outset. The rule here is: "Relational prevention before behavioural prevention".

This means that the number one rule for the successful prevention of mental stress is to create working conditions that are as conducive to health as possible.

These include:

Encourage employee resources

Offer information and education events

Provide strategies for stress management

Consideration of mental stress in risk assessment

Since 2013, it has been the task of every company to recognize not only physically but also mentally stressful working conditions and to implement appropriate measures to minimize them.

To be able to identify working conditions, regular evaluation is required. This means regularly checking whether a company has mental or physical stresses that can have negative consequences for the employees.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to determine the conditions under which employees work. The following factors are considered:

- Work organization: workload, the pace of work, distribution of tasks, etc.
- Working environment: indoor climate, lighting, noise etc.
- Work tasks: high responsibility, emotional strain etc.
- Working atmosphere: communication, cohesion, leadership etc.

So as a leader, pay particular attention to the following behaviours:

- Give your employees the opportunity for self-determination (e.g.: being allowed to co-determine work processes and time allocation).
- Show appreciation to your employees for their work (e.g.: praise, appropriate remuneration).
- Also offer social support to your employees (e.g.: help each other, learn from each other).

All these measures are central to minimizing or, in the best case, preventing psychological stress. However, if these measures do not help, there is a point for every manager when you have to realize: I don't know what to do. I can no longer offer the person concerned the support he or she needs. In this case, you have to take the next step. Turn to external counselling and support services. One possibility, for example, is "employee assistance" programmes, to which affected persons with psychological or social problems can turn and receive professional help, financed by the company.

Practical Relevance

How do I know if someone's experiencing a mental health problem?

You know the people in your team, and you may notice changes in them. You should never make assumptions about people's mental health but clues might include:

- changes in people's behaviour or mood or how they interact with colleagues
- changes in their work output, motivation levels and focus
- struggling to make decisions, get organised and find solutions to problems
- appearing tired, anxious, or withdrawn and losing interest in activities and tasks they previously enjoyed
- changes in eating habits, appetite and increased smoking and drinking

Example

Adjustments for mental health:

- Flexible hours or change to start/finish time.
- Changes to break times
- Provision of quiet rooms
- Light-box or seat with more natural light for someone with seasonal depression
- Relaxing absence rules and limits for those with disability-related sickness absence
- Agreement to give an employee leave at short notice and time off for appointments related to their mental health, such as therapy and counselling.
- Debriefing sessions after difficult calls, customers, or tasks
- Mediation can help if there are difficulties between colleagues
- Mental health support group or disability network group
- Identifying a 'safe space' in the workplace where employees can have some time out, contact their buddy or other sources of support and access self-help
- Provision of self-help information and sharing approaches and adjustments that have proven effective at supporting others
- Encourage people to work on building up their resilience and doing things that support good mental health such as exercise, meditation or eating healthily

9.5 Occupational safety

A central task of every company is also to protect its employees from potential hazards. EU legislation serves as your legal framework for health and safety. According to this, all employees have the right to a high level of health protection and a safe workplace. The right to a working environment that meets their needs is also included.

Let's now take a closer look at EU legislation:

- Employers are obliged to ensure the safety and health protection of their workforce
- Employers must constantly develop health and safety measures and adapt them to current circumstances.
- Employers must always aim to improve current working conditions
- Employers are obliged to evaluate workplace hazards on an ongoing basis and to improve them continuously
- Employers need to define modalities by which employees can be involved in this process.

In doing so, EU law requires all companies to take the following measures:



Practical Relevance

Actions to ensure a healthful and safe workplace:

- Post a worker safety and health policy next to each workplace
- Conduct an all-employee meeting to discuss health and safety. State your organization's goals on the subject.
- If you are in management or ownership, get personally involved with inspections to clearly demonstrate your concern.
- Follow the appropriate safety protocol in areas of your workplace, regardless of how long you are in the area.
- Make employees responsible. Designate health and safety responsibilities just as you do production responsibilities.
- Confirm that all responsibilities are completed.
- Create an accountability system to ensure all health and safety rules are followed.
- Review your program annually and consider adjustments.
- Get your employees interested in and invested in safety by having them help investigate accidents, perform training, and conduct inspections.

Now that we have talked so often about evaluating potential hazards, the question must come up for you: How can hazards be evaluated at all? That is, how can we recognize and detect them? Fortunately, some methods can help you with this.

You can follow 5 steps:

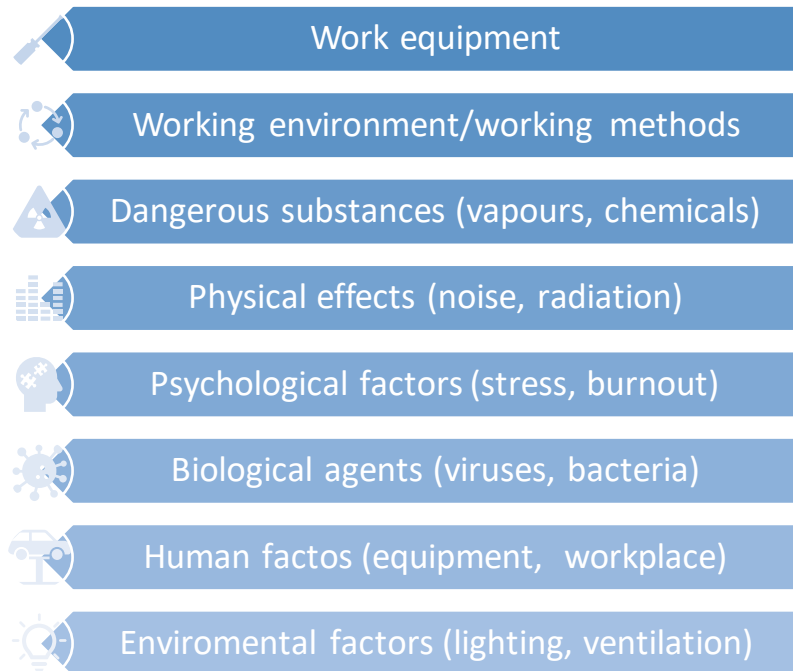


Valuable information to identify hazards is provided by the following sources:

- Analyses of accidents that have happened in the past
- Analyses of health statistics
- Consultations by health and safety institutions

- Analyses of "near-accidents", i.e., accidents that were fortunately avoided but almost resulted in harm. Do not ignore them but consider them as a valuable lesson to prevent accidents by adapting current measures.

For risk assessment, you can use the following list to guide your risk assessment:



Example

You can keep your workers safe by carefully evaluating and analysing the workplace:

- You can improve your safety and health program by looking for patterns. Regularly review a few months of records to see if you can identify any. To optimize your approach upfront and make helpful improvements, look back through illness and injury records over the last few years to uncover trends.
- Understand how to investigate when you have an incident.
- Try to reveal hazards in processes and tools through regular job reviews, going through each task.
- Be certain that anyone who works for you knows that they should let someone in management know whenever they see anything problematic and potentially dangerous.
- Stay current on the newest hazards in your industry. Whenever you make any equipment or process changes, get a professional compliance assessment so you do not create additional hazards.

Note

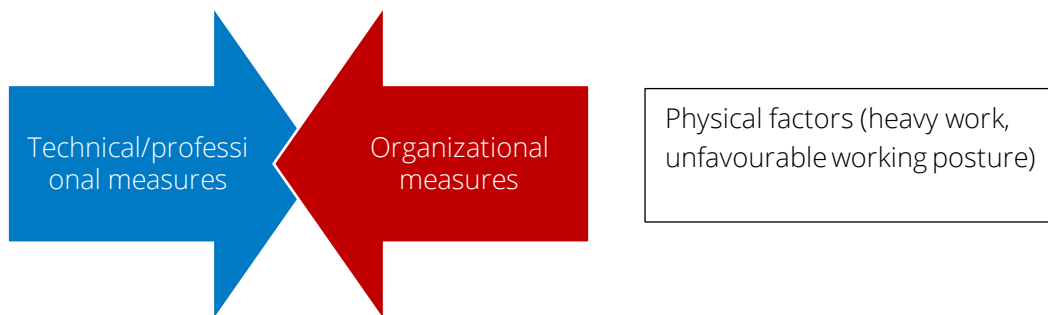
A detailed guide (either from the EU Commission or your national authority) is available for all these hazards to help you identify risks and deal with them successfully.

Important

According to legislation you must always document the steps and results of the risk assessment in writing

What measures does this mean for a company? In principle, it is important to act **before** something happens. That means minimizing dangers in advance. The key word is therefore: prevention.

We can distinguish between two types of prevention measures:



1. Technical and/or professional measures: These attempts to act directly on the source of the hazard to eliminate or reduce it. For example: Provide appropriate safety equipment to minimize the risk of injury.
2. Organizational measures: Here, behaviour or attitudes are changed to increase safety. For example, the cause of hazards or health-endangering factors is often the inefficient design of processes and work for an organisation.

In addition, you should analyze possible risk mitigation measures to minimize potential damage. This includes, for example:

- Emergency plans
- Evacuation planning
- Warning systems such as alarms or flashing lights
- Testing of emergency plans and emergency training

Important

Ensure that your employees are sufficiently informed about health and safety. For example, offer regular training to maintain the required knowledge and refresh it regularly.

Example

- Post basic information for employees to see. It should be displayed somewhere that it is visible to all employees.
- Train managers, supervisors, and employees. Make sure that everyone in the workplace is performing their jobs correctly if you want to avoid accidents. Those who work for your company should know about hazards and how to control them. They should clearly understand the tools and materials involved in their jobs.
- Employees who are taking on new jobs or who are entirely new to the organization are the likeliest to suffer injuries or illnesses since they are unfamiliar with their environments. Guide them carefully.

9.6 The summary

Save knowledge

Health and safety are central components of every company. After all, the health and safety of all employees should be at the top of the priority list. An important prerequisite for this is ergonomics at the workplace, which ensures a healthy workplace design with the help of technical, organizational, and personal measures.

We have found that employees are also exposed to many psychological stresses. The most common psychological stresses are burnout syndrome, depression, and negative stress. It is important to remember that the symptoms do not just occur once or for days at a time, but a person suffers from the symptoms over a longer period. It is therefore the task of every company to also recognize psychologically stressful working conditions and to implement measures to help those affected.

To identify conditions that pose a health risk, evaluation is needed. This means regularly checking whether a company has mental or physical stresses that can have negative consequences for the employees and eliminating them. Of course, it may also be that you are at a loss at a certain point. Admit this to yourself and recognize your limits. Turn to external counselling and support centres where affected employees can receive professional care and counselling.

Lastly, you have learned about the most important aspects of occupational safety in production. The legislation of the EU Commission provides an important legal framework. To identify hazards and prevent them at an early stage, we can fall back on a five-step procedure so that a company can act before something happens. Prevention is the be-all and end-all when it comes to safety and hazard protection.

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