

Risk assessment in small and medium sized companies:

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The “ Service de Santé au Travail multisectoriel”(STM) in Luxembourg is an occupational health service that has the responsibility for 22000 companies. Only 10 % of these companies have more than 15 workers. The law in Luxembourg doesn't require an annual checkup for the workers, but the survey is based on risk exposure. A preemployment examination is requested for all workers. A periodic checkup is only necessary, if the workers are exposed to risks, which need a medical survey specified in the regulation.

The law states that the employer must define an inventory for each workplace including the risks with an exposure level based on frequency and duration of exposure.

To allow a standardized survey, the STM has developed a software programme called RAMSES¹ with a company file and a medical file.

The company file contains a checklist of the hazards and the workplace descriptions: The hazards are divided into categories and the jobs are separated into types of activities, with the hazards that are usually found. The exposure level for some risks such as chemical load or noise exposure, is based on measurements obtained in other companies. However for other risks the evaluation is subjective, based on the experience of the occupational physician.

When the occupational health physician visits the company, he lists all the hazards. Then, he defines the specific risks for each workplace using an exposure level scale from 1-5. To complete the risk assessment, he selects the hazards from his list but also consults the description of the standard risks for this kind of workplace.

In small companies that has not yet been visited, the survey is possible only with a standardized approach. The aim of the standardization is to plan the survey based on risk exposure. Therefore, we have defined categories of workplaces including lists of the jobs with the hazards usually found at each of them.

There is a link between the medical file and the company file. For each risk we have introduced into the database the tests that are necessary with the frequency of their repetition. When the physician introduces the name of the workplace in the medical file, the risk assessment of this workplace is indicated as well as the survey with the tests, like hearing test or blood analysis, that are needed.

The physician can add or remove a risk and the modification of the survey is immediately proposed.

As well for each of the tests as for the medical examination exists a periodicity. An algorithm integrates all of them and optimizes the date for the repetition of the test and for the next checkup.

In the company file, a list of all the workplaces of the company can be visualized. It includes the department, the workplace denomination in the company, the standard job denomination corresponding, the number of male and female working at each workplace and the periodicity for the checkups. A short description of the job activities can be added.

The STM can give the standard model with the risks that are normally present at the different workplaces to the employers. The inventory required by the law can be realized on the basis of this model. The employer can complete the list of the risks by adding or removing those that are not found in his company.

In the medical file, the software programme contains lists with the pathological diseases that are most often discovered in occupational health. For each disease, the physician can indicate, if the disease is related to work or if it is caused by an accident.

The aim of this approach is to allow statistical exploitations. It is possible to relate the diseases to the risk exposure and to define the priorities for occupational health education in a company. It also allows the comparison of the consequences of risk exposure in different companies or to realize epidemiological statistics of a whole population.

¹ Risk assessment medical survey and evaluation software