Social security and a culture of prevention
An integrated approach to safety and health at work
Social security and prevention
A changing world of work requires a new prevention strategy

Prevention pays
Investment in prevention has led to a significant decrease in occupational accidents and diseases. It has saved millions of lives and avoided enormous human suffering. And investment in prevention makes economic sense. An international cost-benefit study carried out by the ISSA documents that investments in prevention have a significant return. Increased health and productivity of workers are strategic assets, not only for companies in local and global markets, but for societies as a whole.

New risks, new approaches
Global trends in occupational health reflect the changing nature of risks, as mortality rates from occupational accidents have reduced, while the impact of work-related health problems is growing in importance.

Today’s working population is faced with “traditional” occupational risks, as well as a multitude of emerging work- and non-work related health challenges. New technologies, ergonomic risks, demographic changes, stress and other psychosocial factors affect the lives and health of workers.

Increasingly, both occupational and non-occupational factors determine health and performance at work. The health of workers has become a crucial factor for the sustainability of social security schemes.

A unified approach to prevention
The focus in prevention is therefore widening, from a traditional technical risk management approach, to the promotion of a more holistic prevention culture, where safety, health and well-being are interrelated. This broad and integrated approach requires the involvement of diverse societal actors, and a unified approach to prevention.

Each year, an estimated 2.3 million people die as a result of work-related accidents and diseases, 313 million suffer non-fatal workplace accidents and 160 million new cases of occupational illnesses are reported. The financial burden of compensation, health care and rehabilitation is huge, and can amount to 4 per cent of GDP annually for work injuries alone.
Towards a global culture of prevention
Social security promotes an integrated approach to safety and health

For social security systems, the preservation of the health of every person is a key objective. Social security systems have an important responsibility to ensure a world of work that is safe and healthy.

In response to the need for a more holistic understanding of prevention in society, the ISSA has developed a three-dimensional prevention approach, linking risk management, health promotion and return-to-work measures.

Putting the person at the centre of prevention
Each of these three dimensions of prevention contributes to the overall objective of a safer and healthier workplace and society. The risk management dimension limits the incidence of accidents and occupational diseases; the health promotion dimension aims to reduce the risks related to non-communicable disease through health surveillance, early diagnosis and intervention. But prevention does not stop there. The return-to-work dimension aims to prevent exclusion through early intervention and rehabilitation.

Together, these three dimensions illustrate that the health of the individual remains at the centre of prevention, and that at each level, a proactive effort is required in order to protect, maintain or restore the health of the worker. The workplace plays a crucial role in all these three-dimensional prevention activities, as it is the place where the workforce can be reached, a culture of prevention can be promoted, and where training measures and organizational prevention efforts can be organized.

Developing a culture of prevention
Safety, health and well-being at work must be placed high on national and international agendas and lead to the development of a genuine prevention culture at the workplace and beyond. A well-functioning occupational safety and health system, supported by a range of societal actors, brings positive effects not only to employers and employees, but ultimately to society as a whole.

The ISSA supports social security policies that foster preventive approaches to protect and promote workers’ health in all branches of social security. Proactive and preventive approaches that enhance employment and health contribute to building a global prevention culture and improve the sustainability of social security systems.
The ISSA and prevention
A unique worldwide forum for occupational safety and health

Prevention has been on the ISSA’s agenda since its creation in 1927. The ISSA has established an expert network of organizations and individuals involved in the prevention of work-related accidents and ill-health that brings together the unique experience, knowledge and expertise from all branches of social security.

The ISSA’s Special Commission on Prevention
The ISSA’s Special Commission on Prevention and its 13 International Sections represent a unique worldwide network of occupational safety and health expertise working to promote a global culture of prevention, placing occupational safety and health high on national agendas.

Building on a unique history of activities, the Special Commission on Prevention fosters the prevention of occupational risks and promotes improvements in the delivery of social security among ISSA members and other stakeholders.

The Special Commission works closely with other ISSA Technical Commissions concerned by workers’ health, including the Commissions on Medical Care and Sickness Insurance, and on Insurance against Employment Accidents and Occupational Diseases.

The ISSA Special Commission on Prevention coordinates a network of International Prevention Sections that provide a pool of specialized prevention knowledge from a wide variety of fields.

The World Congress on Safety and Health at Work
Since 1955, the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work has been co-organized by the ISSA with the International Labour Organization. A unique international prevention platform, the World Congress brings together more than 3,000 safety and health experts, decision makers from the field of social security and the public sector as well as employers’ and workers’ representatives from around the world to exchange ideas, research and best practices on highly topical issues in the area of occupational safety and health.
The ISSA international prevention network
The Special Commission on Prevention and International Prevention Sections

Agriculture  Chemistry  Construction  Culture of Prevention
Education  Electricity  Health  Information
Iron and Metal  Machine and System Safety  Mining  Research  Transport

www.issa.int/prevention
The International Social Security Association (ISSA) is the world’s leading international organization for social security institutions, government departments and agencies. The ISSA promotes excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its members to develop dynamic social security systems and policy throughout the world. Founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization, the ISSA counts more than 340 member organizations in over 160 countries.