

REPORT OF THE DUTCH CIS-CENTRE OVER THE PERIOD 2005/2006

LEGISLATION AND OSH POLICIES:

The most important legislation in the field of occupational health and safety is: the Working Conditions Act / Occupational Health and Safety Act (“Arbidsomstandighedenwet” or “Arbowet”), containing a code of conduct for safety & health policy, and the Working Hours Act (“Arbeidstijdenwet”), forming a statutory framework for working hours.

Within the framework of the government aims to tackle the overabundance of legislation and reduce the administrative burdens e.g. in 2006, the government is preparing a new Occupational Health & Safety Act and a new Working Hours Act, which will drastically cut the amount of regulations.

A proposal to revise the Occupational Health and Safety Act was sent to the Dutch Parliament on May 9, 2006 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The plans aim at providing more freedom for employers and workers to determine health and safety policies within their own organisation / branch of industry (for further information: see the international website of the Ministry (<http://internationalezaken.szw.nl>), under News, date May 15, 2006).

Earlier in 2006, a proposal for a new Working Hours Act was agreed upon by the Cabinet (see <http://internationalezaken.szw.nl>, under News, date Feb 6, 2006). The proposal was sent to Parliament in April 2006.

ACTIVITIES OF THE LABOUR INSPECTORATE IN THE FIELD OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY IN 2005:

In 2005 39 inspection projects were carried out in various sectors and branches of industry in respect of which 20,751 inspections were carried out in total. With regard to 56% of these inspections, one or more violations were detected during the initial intervention. In total, 13,327 enforcement tools were deployed in this respect. During 2005 the main OSH issues and priorities were: hazardous substances (such as organic solvents, and pesticides), physical workload / manual handling; hazardous machines and transport equipment; falling objects / risks of falling; work stress and aggression/violence at work.

In follow-up interventions an enforcement tool was deployed in 4% of the cases. Usually this involved the administrative penalty. In 2005 administrative penalties amounting to nearly €7 million were imposed, of which amount €17,402 was imposed on 154 employees.

In 2005 a total of 1918 complaints and 2350 industrial accidents were investigated. With regard to 91% of the complaints upheld (in part or in whole) by the Labour Inspectorate, an enforcement tool was deployed in connection with their investigation.

PUBLICATIONS (selection):

Please note that all publications (unless otherwise indicated) are in Dutch.

OSH-information sheets (AI-sheets)(available through SDU):

Per January 2006, the Ministry is no longer involved in the publication of AI-sheets (“Arbo-informatiebladen”) that were previously published “under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment”. The AI-sheets are still being published by the SDU as a commercial product.

OSH-brochures for specific branches:

In 2006 the Labour Inspectorate started developing brochures for specific branches of industry. These brochures describe the main OSH risks in that sector, and the procedures of the Labour Inspectorate during inspections in that branch of industry. The first 4 brochures have been published (<http://arbeidsinspectie.szw.nl>) for the following branches of industry: health care sector; industrial cleaning; printing industry; wood industry.

Study reports:

Many of these studies were carried out within the framework of OSH covenants. Examples published in 2005/2006 are:

- Workload and work stress in the banking sector : monitoring of prevalence and risk factors
- Evaluation of the OSH-covenant in municipalities
- Pilot on reduction of work stress in the construction industry: organizing the work differently
- Providing OSH-information in the construction industry: measuring the effects of the introduction of OSH-consultants
- Evaluation of the OSH-covenant in the construction industry
- Developments in the state-of-the-art measures for controlling welding fumes in the metal industry
- Minimising the exposure to organic solvents in the furniture industry
- Working conditions in the ambulance services
- Evaluation of the OSH-covenant for the police
- The advantages of the OSH-covenant approach : update on sickness absenteeism and working disability figures over 2004 in branches of industry with an OSH-covenant (as compared to branches without an OSH-covenant)
- Physical workload in the wood and furniture industry
- Statistical analysis of the doses as a result of occupational exposure to ionizing radiation 1995-2004
- "Arbobalans 2005" : an overview of OSH risks, effects and measures in The Netherlands

It is the policy of the Ministry to publish these reports as much as possible free of charge on the internet as pdf-files (at <http://www.szw.nl> or <http://www.arboconvenanten.szw.nl/>).

Criteria documents (published the Dutch Health Council; all in English):

- Health-based recommended occupational exposure limit on various substances:
 - Calcium oxide; Hydrogen sulphide; Tin and inorganic tin compounds; Glutaraldehyde
- Health-based calculated occupational cancer risk values:
 - Acrylamide; BaP and PAH from coal-derived sources
- Evaluation of the effects on reproduction of various substances:
 - Formic acid; Methanol; Trichloroacetic acid

Furthermore, 2005 marked the end of the project of the Health Council (at the request of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment) to re-evaluate administrative in a condensed procedure. Since the start of this project in 2000 a total of 158 reports were published.

These publications are also available full-text as PDF-files at the internet-site of the Health Council, at the address: <http://www.gr.nl/>

CPR guidelines / PGS publications:

In 2004 the Advisory Council on Dangerous Substances ("Adviesraad Gevaarlijke Stoffen" - AGS) was installed by the Cabinet. At the same time the Committee for the Prevention of Disasters ("Commissie voor de Preventie van Rampen"- CPR) was abolished. CPR issued several publications, the so-called

CPR-guidelines ("CPR-richtlijnen", then issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment), that are often used in environmental permits, based on the Environmental Protection Law, and in the fields of labour safety, transport safety and fire safety. The CPR-guidelines have been transformed into the Publication Series on Dangerous Substances ("Publicatiereeks Gevaarlijke Stoffen" – PGS). The aim of these publications is generally the same as that of the CPR-guidelines. The PGS publications are available free of charge as pdf's on the web site of the Ministry of VROM

(<http://www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=9258#PGevStof>)

Most of the publications are in Dutch, but a few are published in English, such as:

PGS 2: Methods for the calculation of physical effects, due to releases of hazardous materials (liquids and gases) (the so-called Yellow book), formerly CPR 14E

PGS3: Guidelines for quantitative risk assessment (the so-called Purple book), formerly CPR 18

PGS 4: Methods for determining and processing probabilities (the so-called Red book), formerly CPR 12E.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES:

Database activities:

The bibliographic labour database of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (that was started in 1987) is produced in co-operation with the Expert Centre of the Labour Inspectorate and other Dutch organisations such as TNO Work and Employment ("TNO Arbeid") in Hoofddorp (previously in Amsterdam). The database contains ± 118,000 records. Subjects covered in this database include: occupational health and safety, labour market, income, industrial relations, social security, equal opportunity etc. Approximately 35% of the records deal with occupational health and safety issues. Since the end of 2000 the library catalogue of TNO Work and Employment (which overlaps to a certain extent with the SZW database) is available free of charge via the internet, at the address: <http://tno-arbeid.adlibsoft.com/adlib/>

At the end of 2002, a project was started to include a link to the full-text document in the record description. For this project, various organizations that publish relevant information were contacted for permission to download their publications for inclusion in the SZW-database (in order to comply with copyright regulations). At the moment (September 2006), about 6000 records contain a link to the full-text document (in pdf).

Inquiries and reporting:

The Central Public Inquiry Service responded to about 50,000 inquiries by telephone during 2005; about 10-15% of the inquiries were related to occupational health and safety issues. Although many questions could be dealt with by providing free leaflets or brochures, the majority of the questions required specific and detailed knowledge of those handling these questions. The number of inquiries by telephone has decreased during the last couple of years, due to the increased use of information on the SZW website (www.szw.nl), and the increased use of e-mail (see next paragraph). Requests for information can also be sent by mail or e-mail; in 2005 a total of 3,000 letters and 20,000 e-mails were answered. The number of e-mails is increasing rapidly: from 8,400 in 2003 to 20,000 in 2005.

In 2003 it was investigated how the telephone and e-mail inquiry service was used and appreciated by the target groups. Based on the results of the survey the presentation of information on the SZW internet site was improved. In 2006, a repeat survey was carried out on the use and appreciation of the telephone enquiry service. The results showed that the reputation and use of the website had increased during that period. More and more people use the SZW internet site for answering their questions. Those using the telephone inquiry service indicated that they used this service because their problem was too complicated for the internet site or the e-mail service and they preferred the direct exchange of information / immediate answer by telephone. Users of the telephone inquiry

services were positive about the customer friendliness of the service and the quality of the answers they received.

Library:

Loaning books and receiving photocopies by mail is only possible for employees of the ministry or through other libraries using the Interlibrary Loan system; employees from commercial businesses, occupational health services or social partners are referred to TNO Work and Employment ("TNO Arbeid") in Hoofddorp.

The Library (accessible to the general public) received about 20,000 visitors in 2005. Visitors can search the total library collection, the SZW labour database and all CD-ROMs / DVDs available in the library (such as: OSH-ROM, EINECS, and Kluwer Datalex).

Internet / intranet:

In the last couple of years several new websites were launched by the Ministry; of special interest are:

- an English language website (www.employment.gov.nl or <http://www.socialaffairs.szw.nl>), describing the main policies and activities of the Ministry. This site was revised and updated in 2006. Policy areas discussed are: employment; social protection; safety and health; equality; socio-economic policy. For each policy area the information is divided into: (a) information aimed at citizens and (b) information on policies.
- a website presenting information on the introduction and application of Safety & Health Covenants ("Arboconvenanten") in various branches of industry (<http://www.arboconvenanten.szw.nl>).
- a website presenting information on OSH policy concerning hazardous substances "Versterking Arbobeleid Stoffen (VAST)": (<http://www.vast.szw.nl>)
- a website on improving occupational safety ("Versterking arbeidsveiligheid"): (www.arbeidsveiligheid.szw.nl)

Relevant Dutch internet-sites:

- Labour Inspectorate: <http://www.arbeidsinspectie.szw.nl> or <http://www.arbeidsinspectie.nl>
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: <http://www.szw.nl>
- TNO Work and Employment ("TNO Arbeid"): <http://www.arbeid.tno.nl> (the library catalogue is available at: <http://tno-arbeid.adlibsoft.com/adlib>)
- Dutch Focal Point: <http://nl.osha.eu.int> or <http://www.arbo.nl>
- Ministry of Housing, Social Planning and the Environment (<http://www.vrom.nl>): this Ministry (generally known under its Dutch acronym VROM) is responsible for the area of external safety (including issues as the Seveso directive and the REACH programme concerning chemicals substances). The issues of external safety and occupational safety are clearly linked and the policies and information from this ministry are therefore also relevant for occupational safety. Information on external safety can be found under the header "Environment" (<http://international.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=7391>)
- Portal site Dutch Government: <http://www.overheid.nl> (publications of the Dutch parliament and the Official Journal are available full-text since 1995 at: <http://www.overheid.nl/op> ; legislation is available full-text at: <http://www.wetten.overheid.nl>)

Elly Goos

Contact Officer Dutch CIS Centre

tel: + 31 70 333 4575

e-mail: cgoos@minszw.nl