

► Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises

INVEST NOW IN RESILIENT OSH SYSTEMS

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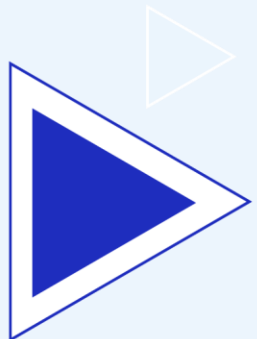


The COVID-19 pandemic: a global challenge for safety and health at work

- ▶ **Workers** and people in the world of work have been at risk of infection
- ▶ Some **workplaces** have become sources of outbreaks of the virus
- ▶ Certain work settings are at particular risk (close contact between workers, poor ventilation)

OSH risks in the workplace:

- ▶ Risk of acquiring the **novel coronavirus**
- ▶ Other risks that have emerged due to new work practices and procedures (**chemical, ergonomic, psychosocial risks, violence and harassment**)



The COVID-19 pandemic: a crisis for safety and health at work

Emergency and health care workers face higher OSH risks

136 MILLION

healthcare and social workers are at serious risk of contracting COVID-19 at work²

7,000 healthcare workers' deaths³

globally may be attributed to COVID-19

14% OF ALL INFECTIONS

occurred among healthcare workers⁴

1 in 5 HEALTHCARE WORKERS

have reported depression and anxiety symptoms during the pandemic⁵

► Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and Recommendation (No. 164)

- Adoption of a coherent **national OSH policy**
- Action to be taken both at the national and enterprise level to promote OSH and improve working conditions
- Basic rights and responsibilities for employers and workers in the field of OSH
- Further requirements for the **recording and notification** of occupational accidents and diseases in the Protocol of 2002 (No. 155)

► Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161) and Recommendation (No. 171)

- Establishment of enterprise-level **occupational health services**
 - ▷ entrusted with essentially preventive functions
 - ▷ responsible for advising the employer, the workers and their representatives in the enterprise on maintaining a safe and healthy working environment

- Critical role during health crises
 - ▷ Help employers and workers adopt adequate measures in the workplace
 - ▷ Support OSH management in health care facilities, ensuring the continuity of the emergency response and essential health services

► Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and Recommendation (No. 197)

- Promotion of a **national preventive safety and health culture**
- Establishment of a **sound national OSH system**
 - ▷ National OSH policy and regulatory frameworks (OSH laws and regulations, collective agreements and other relevant instruments; Mechanisms for ensuring compliance)
 - ▷ National OSH institutional framework (OSH authority or body; National tripartite advisory body; collaboration with relevant insurance or social security)
 - ▷ Occupational health services
 - ▷ Information, advisory services and training on OSH
 - ▷ Data collection and research on OSH
 - ▷ Promotion of OSH at the enterprise level (cooperation between management, workers and their representatives; progressive improvement in MSMEs and informal economy)



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National OSH policy and regulatory frameworks

► Strengthening effective national OSH policies and regulatory frameworks to better respond to crises and emergencies

A comprehensive and functional regulatory system should include:

- a basic and overarching OSH act **covering all workers and sectors**, defining **basic OSH rights and responsibilities**
- laws and regulations, covering **specific sectors or hazards**
- codes of practice and technical standards, providing **specific guidance**
- collective bargaining agreements

► **New legal requirements to prevent the spread of the virus in the workplace**

- Provisions for the identification and control of potential sources of exposure
- Sector specific procedures and protocols to prevent and deal with COVID-19 in the workplace
 - ▷ physical distancing
 - ▷ working from home arrangements
 - ▷ responding to positive cases of COVID-19 in the workplace
 - ▷ personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - ▷ safe commuting to and from the workplace, etc.
- Protection from unfair dismissal and provision for sick pay and benefits to ensure compliance with quarantine requirements

► Recognition of occupational accidents and diseases

ILO standards provide grounds for the recognition of COVID-19 as occupational injury, but is contingent upon each country's national law to consider whether and how:

- *Recognition for healthcare workers or emergency personnel, both under existing legislation (e.g., Turkey and Belgium) or with new regulations (e.g., Colombia)*
- *Recognition for other workers at higher risks, such as those in essential services (e.g. Argentina)*
- *Recognition as an occupational injury for workers irrespective of their occupation (Italy, Spain, Denmark)*

► Ensuring compliance with national laws and regulations: the role of labour inspection during the COVID-19 crisis

- Strong labour inspection system, covering all types of enterprises and all workers, is essential to implement OSH regulations, identify cases of non-compliance, assist to rectify them, and prevent new cases
- **Strategy to deal with emergencies**
 - ▷ promote compliance with new OSH requirements adopted to respond to the crisis
 - ▷ maintain the enforcement of other regulations and ensure a continued response to other persistent OSH risks
 - ▷ protect the safety and health of inspectors while performing their duties (including the risk of contagion, the risk of violence and harassment that may increase during emergencies, etc.)

► *Intensification of labour inspection activity: some examples from around the world*

- *In **Myanmar**, workplaces were ordered to close and could only resume operations when approved by a labour inspection team to ensure compliance with COVID-19 guidelines*
- ***Mexico** expanded labour inspections to ensure work being performed onsite in enterprises was deemed essential, verify compliance with COVID-19 prevention and control requirements and monitor compliance with other OSH legal provisions*
- *In **Singapore**, the entire inspection personnel was mobilized to inspect workplaces as well as dormitories where workers are housed, with a focus on OSH issues related to COVID-19. In addition, more than 100 officers were assigned to check on companies who did not implement flexible work arrangements*



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National OSH institutional frameworks

► An authority or body responsible for OSH

- Key component of the **OSH administration** at the national level
- **Proactively** involved in crisis response management at the national level
- Provides **leadership** and acts as a trusted source during times of crises

- Coordination
 - ▷ between the **various institutions** involved
 - ▷ between **national and local levels**

▶ A national tripartite advisory body addressing OSH issues and the impact of COVID-19

- ▶ Common mechanism to ensure **social partners' participation** in OSH governance (building consensus through a tripartite approach allows for better implementation of measures)
- ▶ Different roles and functions (from a consultative role to a decision-making role)
- ▶ Participation in the OSH discussion at the national level, including the issuance of instructions or guidance to mitigate the impact of the crisis

► Collaboration with relevant insurance or social security schemes covering occupational injuries and diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for collaboration with relevant **insurance** or **social security schemes**, managing accidents and diseases when they occur

- ▷ medical care, vocational rehabilitation, cash benefits and compensation to workers who are injured on the job or who develop occupational diseases
- ▷ survivors' benefits for families of victims of occupational fatalities

Occupational Health Services

► Functions

- Identification and assessment of OSH risks
- Surveillance of the working environment and working practices which may affect workers' health
- Advice on planning and organization of work
- Participation in developing programmes for the improvement of working practices
- Advice on OSH, ergonomics and individual and collective protective equipment
- Surveillance of workers' health
- Promotion of the adaptation of work to the worker
- Contribution to vocational rehabilitation
- Collaboration in providing OSH information, training and education
- Organization of first aid and emergency treatment
- Participation in analysis of occupational accidents and occupational diseases

All these functions are essential to help employers mitigate the risk of contagion and other associated risks during the COVID-19 pandemic

► Collaboration with external services

- with the **public health system** of the country as a whole as well as institutions and facilities in local communities, in order to facilitate coordination with specialized health services for appropriate treatment of occupational injuries and diseases
- with **emergency response organizations** and **first aid providers** such as ambulance services, hospital outpatient and emergency clinics, poison control centres, police and fire brigades and civic rescue organizations to ensure the expeditious treatment of acute injuries and assist in planning for and responding to major emergencies
- with **social security** and **health insurance institutions** to facilitate the administration of benefits and functioning of the workers' compensation system

Information, advisory services and training on OSH

► Information and advisory services on OSH

- Provide vital, up-to-date information to workers, their representatives and employers during routine work and emergency scenarios, including about both existing and newly introduced OSH requirements
 - ▷ **OSH national authorities and bodies** have played a leading role in the dissemination of information on COVID-19, creating ad hoc sites and producing materials for different sectors that are easily reproducible for distribution to workers or posting in workplaces
 - ▷ **Social Partners** have also been very active in collaborating with governments and supporting their members to take action in the workplace for preventing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19
 - ▷ **Workers' representatives** are uniquely positioned to contribute to facilitating communication with workers about emerging risks and how they affect them

► Awareness-raising campaigns

- Important for promoting OSH on key topics, particularly in crisis situations
- Effective means of disseminating essential information and for sensitizing workers, employers and communities about OSH rights and responsibilities
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been campaigns to raise awareness on different topics, for example:
 - ▷ the risk of transmission of the virus among essential workers
 - ▷ increases in violence and harassment

► Provision of training on OSH

- Amendment of OSH training plans to cover
 - ▷ new hazards and risks emerged during the crisis
 - ▷ how to apply and follow new measures and procedures adopted
- Sector specific approaches
- *In **South Africa**, the government required that all workers complete a training on COVID-19 and OSH before returning to work*
- *In **Ireland**, the HSA created a “Return to Work Safely Induction” online course, which workers are required to take before returning to work*
- *In **Singapore**, the Building and Construction Authority created a compulsory online COVID-Safe training for workers in the construction sector focusing on the risks specific to these workers*

Data collection and research on OSH

► Building a comprehensive and effective system for gathering and analysing OSH data and information

- Essential for developing informed policies, laws and regulations, strategies and other measures on OSH, including responding to crisis situations
- Should include:
 - ▷ Mechanisms and structures for **recording and notification** of occupational accidents and diseases
 - ▷ Complementary mechanisms to collect other OSH data and statistics
 - ▷ Research capacity to identify new and emerging risks and new preventive techniques for addressing them

► Gathering other OSH data and information in times of crisis

- **Labour inspection statistics** can provide data on occupational accidents and occupational diseases, compliance and other OSH related issues
- **Surveys and studies**, both general and by sector, can be carried out on critical aspects of the organization and implementation of prevention measures in enterprises
 - ▷ Surveys can be performed by **social partners**, collecting data about their members perceptions and experiences.

► Research on OSH and COVID-19

- Necessary to better ascertain the realities of OSH situations
- Very relevant for the development and updating of regulations, particularly to
 - ▷ identify the specific risks in a certain **sector** or industry (including both exposure to the virus and other associated risks) and effective solutions to mitigate or eliminate them
 - ▷ gain deeper knowledge of the situation of particular **groups of workers** that are presumed to be exposed to special or unusually severe risks
 - ▷ identify and assess short and long term **health consequences** (including those resulting from other related risks and working situations)
 - ▷ assess **compliance** and ascertain how effective legal provisions are by sector, region and type of enterprise with the aim of increasing adherence of duty holders



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Strengthening OSH management systems at the enterprise level

► Emergency prevention, preparedness and response

- A sound OSH management system should include the establishment and maintenance of **emergency prevention, preparedness and response arrangements**
 - ▷ identify the potential for emergency situations and address the OSH risks associated with them
 - ▷ made to the size and nature of activity of the enterprise
 - ▷ ensure that the necessary information, communication and coordination are provided to protect all people in the event of an emergency at the worksite
 - ▷ provide information and communication with the relevant competent authorities, the neighbourhood and emergency response services;
 - ▷ address first-aid and medical assistance, fire-fighting and evacuation
 - ▷ provide relevant information and training to all members of the enterprise
 - ▷ be established in cooperation with external emergency services and other bodies

► Hazard identification and risk assessment

- Identify **all** occupational hazards and assess the associated risks assessed on an on-going basis
- Consider the **work environment**, the **tasks** and the **measures** already available
- Consider the **entire working day**, including access to common areas such as dormitories, transportation, cafeterias, sanitary facilities or areas of circulation
- Carried out before any modifications/ introduction of new work methods/ processes/equipment
- Address **all workers**, as well as **suppliers, clients** and **visitors**
- Take into account **workers' individual characteristics**

► **Adoption of OSH measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission in the workplace**

- Based on thorough OSH risk assessments
- Follow the hierarchy of controls
- Adapted to the hazards and risks encountered by the enterprise
- Reviewed and modified if necessary on a regular basis
- Comply with national laws and regulations
- Reflect good practice
- Consider the current state of knowledge

► Addressing psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Anxiety** produced by the health risks of the coronavirus, **uncertainty** about how long the crisis will last, the **worry** of possibly losing their jobs or being forced to close businesses, etc.
- Psychosocial hazards arising from **radical changes** in work organization, processes, and conditions (including telework)
 - ▷ For example: isolation, changes in workload and work pace, overlapping of professional and family duties, violence and harassment, etc.

► Support mechanisms for progressive improvement of OSH conditions in MSMEs and the informal economy

- Particularly affected by the effects of the pandemic
- Lack the resources to invest in OSH
- Many workers in these sectors are already at higher risk for accidents or diseases in the workplace

- Need for special initiatives, for example
 - ▷ Strengthening **partnerships** with social partners and other strategic actors (e.g., public health care systems, social security institutions, NGOs, education institutions, etc.)
 - ▷ Promoting **mentorship** by large companies and developing **networks** of MSMEs

Incentives for promoting compliance among employers

- ▶ The COVID-19 crisis has been challenging for employers as they need to invest resources in OSH (new measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and to address other emerging risks) while facing the economic effects of the pandemic on revenue
- ▶ Economic incentives (tax incentives, insurance-related incentives, matching funds and non-financial incentives, such as recognition and awards)
 - ▷ Strategy for motivating employers to invest in prevention work in OSH



*In the **Philippines**, the government created a “COVID-19 Response Award” for employers who successfully stopped the spread of the virus in their workplaces through OSH policies and programs. The criteria for this award was drawn from the ILO Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work Action Checklist*

Looking forward: Resilient OSH systems to face the next crisis

- ▶ Investing to strengthen OSH systems will aid governments, employers and workers in
 - ▶ responding to the current pandemic
 - ▶ safeguarding health in the workplace
 - ▶ recovering faster by avoiding further contagion

Building up these resilient systems will also provide a foundation to respond to other unforeseen events and crises that may occur in the future

► So, what is the next step?

- review the current OSH system (national OSH profile)
- identify gaps
- set up priority element(s) in line with national OSH policy and programme
- engage tripartite partners and stakeholders
- develop and implement plans of action
- Mobilize resources

Seek ILO's technical assistance!

ILO tools to protect workers' safety and health during COVID-19 crisis

- ▶ Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work: Action checklist (April 2020)
- ▶ In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work – World Day for Safety and Health at Work Report (April 2020)
- ▶ A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic – Policy Brief (May 2020)
- ▶ A Safe Return to Work: Ten Action Points (May 2020)
- ▶ Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic – Guide (June 2020)
- ▶ Practical Guide on Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond (July 2020)
- ▶ COVID-19 and health facilities: Checklist of measures to be taken in health facilities (July 2020)
- ▶ Hand hygiene at the workplace: an essential occupational safety and health prevention and control measure against COVID-19 – Briefing Note (September 2020)
- ▶ Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 at work for small and medium-sized enterprises: Action Checklist (August 2020)



Thank you