

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) In Industries - Need for a Strategic Approach

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Abstract

Due to increased business activity in major sectors in the backdrop of globalization, there is an increased vulnerability of employees to workplace injuries and health related hazards. Companies have started operating in more transparent manner regarding safety of employees. The process of measures to avoid workplace related occupational health hazards is a continuous and dynamic one and situation driven. More professionals in the diagnosis of OHH related problems are need of the hour. Leadership training both at managerial and workmen level will help percolate the safety procedures in any industry. Task Based and process based health risk assessment provide knowledge on potential risks areas for developing strategies. Trained safety ambassadors are the change agents to improve the OH&S culture and to implement safety programmes. Safety aspects at material procurement and supply chain level are also, an important aspect for the companies while addressing OHS strategy.

Keywords- Occupational Health Hazards, safety procedures, training, OHS strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Safety, health and environment at workplace are a major concern in industries, in the process of business transformation towards sustainable approach. A policy towards this object has become prime aspect for the management. In view of awareness, a transparent business activity is a must for retention of talent and market leadership. There is a strong need for more professionals to handle different exposures at workplace¹. National policy on safety, health and environment at work place seeks to bring the national objectives into focus as a step towards improvement in safety, health and environment at workplace. The objectives are to achieve- a) Continuous reduction in the incidence of work related injuries, fatalities, diseases, disasters and loss of national assets. b) Improved coverage of work related injuries, fatalities and diseases and provide for a more comprehensive data base for facilitating better performance and monitoring. c) Continuous enhancement of community awareness regarding safety, health and environment at workplace related areas. d) Continually increasing community expectation of workplace health and safety standards. Occupational

health remains neglected in most developing countries due to competing social, economic, and political challenges². The Constitution of India provide detailed provisions for the rights of the citizens and also lays down the Directive Principles of State Policy which set an aim to which the activities of the state are to be guided. These Directive Principles provide a) for securing the health and strength of employees, men and women; b) that the tender age of children are not abused; c) that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength; d) just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief are provided; and e) that the Government shall take steps, by suitable legislation or in any other way, to secure the participation of employee in the management of undertakings, establishments or other organizations engaged in any industry. The present globalization provides more opportunities and many business houses expanding their activity have started ethical means to increase their economic growth. In view of international laws and initiatives companies have started operating business in a sustainable manner to increase the credibility and retain the brand. Towards this goal companies are making disclosures in view of international sanctions and standards. The impact of sustainability reporting will help the company in maintaining their goodwill in the society in which it operates³. The present communication makes an attempt to analyze the managerial approach and actions to protect the employees from work place occupational health hazards in different situations.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was made on different aspects of safety and workplace hazards in companies. Secondary data collected from disclosers made available by companies operating in different domains on websites was analyzed to study the managerial intervention being made to safe guard the employees' workplace safety and health. An attempt has been made to present OHS strategies to be followed for employees' safety at workplace.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The disclosures made by companies suggested that the process of measures to avoid workplace related occupational health hazards is a

continuous and dynamic one and situation driven. Companies are preparing OHS standards of all relevant issues, from workplace safety to ergonomics and occupational hygiene to toxicology. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is a policy statement of commitment of any business house to operate in a safe and responsible manner, protecting workers. This needs a pool of specially trained safety professionals along with trained line management.

The OHS comprises metrics Lost Time Injuries (LTIs), Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate, Fatalities (Number) (LTIFR) and Man-days Lost (Number of days) (Table 1, 2 & 3). UN resolved to push the MDGs in a more elaborative way with specificity to each developmental goal⁴. The UN proposed MDG's include a clear initiative for protecting labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers and in precarious employment⁴. Management strategies for OHS by different sectors were initiated to suit their requirement.

Table 1: Metrics in Occupational Health Hazards (OHS)

Lost Time Injuries (LTIs)	Lost Time Case / Injury is considered as cases where injured person does not return to work in his next scheduled shift
Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR)	LTIFR = (Number of LTI injuries X 10 ⁶) /Man-hours worked i.e. Number of LTI injuries per 1 million man-hours worked
Fatalities (Number)	Number of fatal Injuries reported in a reporting cycle
Man-days Lost (No. of days)	Number of man-days lost, excluding the day of injury and return to work

The OHS strategy protocol is to be prepared based on the type of domain of operation. The main process of managerial skill depends on well planned sequence of events.

1. Establishment of standards: Standards with measures and procedures to mitigate and manage OHS risks.
2. Evaluation of standards: Evaluation of standards and tailoring them for new work activity for hazards.
3. Conducting occupational risk assessments: To identify control measures and periodically
4. Monitor the effectiveness of the implemented control measures for improvements.

5. Emergency management plans: Implementing an appropriate communication system to understand and comply with safety requirements
6. Training employees in health and safety aspects
7. Providing emergency medical assistance services

Table 2: Occupational health hazards at Maruti Suzuki⁵

Year	Injury and injury rate		Accident & lost days	
	Injuries (nos.)	Injury Rate (per 100 emp)	Man hours worked (million hrs.)	Lost Days Rate (per 100 emp)
2010	9	0.49	44.4	0.0098
2011	10	0.43	45.6	0.0095
2012	7	0.26	59.2	0.0000
2013	6	0.23	55.6	0.0075
2014	4	0.16	55.7	0.0039

Risk assessment is a crucial mechanism for identification, analysis, mitigation and monitoring of safety risks on a continual basis (Table 4). Based on type of control mechanism action plan has to be initiated for different areas of safety development.

Table 3: Safety Performance of Tata Motors Limited⁶

Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016
Lost time injuries (Nos.)	122	59	31	27
Lost time injury frequency rate (per million man hours)	0.68	0.39	0.2	0.17
Total recordable cases (Nos.)	448	228	295	236
Total recordable cases frequency rate (per million man-hours)	2.49	2.23	1.91	1.49
Road Fatality of a sales employee during business travel	1	1	1	1

Table 4: Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment action¹⁰

TYPE 1 Controls	Task-based with focus on leadership development. (Job Safety Analysis, Safe Work Procedures, Task Hazard Analysis) ACTION- Task Planning Safety Interactions
TYPE 2 Controls	System based with focus on process (Standards, Golden Rules) ACTION- Implementation Audits, Improvement Plans
TYPE 3 Controls	Business/System based with focus on critical event (Formal Risk Assessment) ACTION- Bow Tie Analysis, Critical Controls

Behaviour Based Safety (BBS) is an initiative to promote a safety conscious working environment. This helps in to increase in engagement level by means of safe and unsafe act conversations,

for creation of a baseline data for safe behaviour⁷. Task Based Health Risk Assessment (TBHRA) is initiative by RIL⁸ to identify health and safety risks specific to the various tasks in our operations to arrive at an employee level health risk profile. The objective is to provide guidance for corrective actions to ensure excellence in occupational health and safety performance. Upon completion of the risk profiling, the results will be linked with the employees' periodic medical examinations (PMEs). The frequency of the PMEs and the examinations and tests conducted as part of the PMEs will be modified according to the risk profile. Ambuja Cement has 'We Care' programme, in which each plant is divided into small manageable geographical areas called 'zones'. Each zone is led by a zone owner, who also has line responsibility for his core function. The zone owner is typically supported by seven to nine safety ambassadors. A typical safety ambassador is a direct supervisor of a group of workmen. Around 250 identified zone owners and around 1,600 safety ambassadors were trained on technical and behavioural aspects. These trained employees became the change agents to improve the OH&S culture and to implement the programme by directly connecting to our workforce of approximately 15,000 people. This was done through four to six hours of sensitisation and idea generation workshops. Risk assessment at material procurement and supply chain level is also, an important aspect for the companies while addressing OHS strategy. The process involves four stages⁹ viz.,

1. Communication of the supplier code of conduct to existing & potential suppliers.
2. Supplier prioritisation by identification of potential high-risk suppliers based on operating Companies' judgment of local conditions.
3. Risk assessment by continuous evaluation of risk exposure through self-assessment, fact finding or verification
4. Risk mitigation by supplier development or replacement, as determined by operating companies and finally preparing score card of continuous performance of the suppliers.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

More qualified professionals are needed to diagnose the health hazards at workplace arising out of newer situations. OHH should be taken as a serious aspect for sustainable business activity. Companies should prepare precise standards and procedures to train staff on the issues of OHH. Leadership training will help for better percolation of safety procedures and sensitize employees on safety. Conducting external audit to review compliance of safety standards will be of much importance to tackle OHS issues very precisely.

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