

2009 Newsletter

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Protecting Worker's Life and Health **KOSHA** Newsletter

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- **Top Issues**

- KOSHA, Full-scale Activities to Host the 31st ICOH Congress.

The Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) announced on February 11 that it had submitted an application for hosting the 2015 International Congress on Occupational Health, which will be organized by the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH). Approximately 2,000 industrial health experts representing 93 countries will be in attendance. Korea, Ireland, and Australia are currently bidding for the Congress. The final decision will be made by member voting at the 29th International Congress on Occupational Health scheduled to be held next month in the Republic of South Africa.

To gain support for the bidding effort, KOSHA plans to hold a forum on February 12 at the Occupational Safety and Health Research Institute with academics, domestic members of the academics International Commission on Occupational Health and officials from the Korea National Tourism Organization. KOSHA is requesting close cooperation by all forum participants.

"The International Congress on Occupational Health (ICOH) is the largest global event in the occupational health sector" stated Kang Seung-kyu, Director General of the Occupational Safety & Health Research Institute.

"If we win the bid, Korea will become the 3rd nation to host the Congress. I believe it will provide a new turning point for our effort to prevent occupational accidents and diseases following the XVIII World Congress on Safety and Health at Work which was successfully held in Seoul, in 2008."

- 3 Major Accidents Down Sharply, Closer to Goal of 0.68% Accident rate
- KOSHA Set 6 Priorities for 2009

The Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) has set its six priorities including significant reduction of the three most frequent accidents as part of effort to reach its goal of lowering Korea's industrial accident rate to 0.68 percent.

The six priorities presented in the agency's 2009 management plan are as follows.

- a sizable decrease of the top three industrial accidents
- a gradual fall of occupational diseases
- promotion of safety culture
- improvement of infrastructure for safety and health at work
- expansion of specialist fields
- enhancement of the agency's governance for business efficiency

The agency aims to drop the number of industrial casualties by 3.8 percent from 78,657 in 2007 to 75,651 in 2009, and the number of occupational disease cases by 7 percent from 11,472 to 10,699. As a key national agency for securing safety and health at work, KOSHA is planning to support the health and safety service industries and establish scientific strategies by strengthening its capability of R&D and analysis. Moreover, the agency will organize various seminars, forums and training programs for safety consultants to advance safety culture in the workplace. It will also introduce the Industrial Safety Culture Certificate System to 200 companies on a pilot basis. KOSHA hopes to raise public awareness of safety and health at work by preparing the Safety Awareness Index, conducting a survey, and operating an educational web site. To achieve higher efficiency, KOSHA will give more authority to its regional offices to come up with specific management plans customized to each area.

- **Korea's OSH News**

- Accident Casualties Down by 10,000 in 2009

- Labor Ministry Gives Full Support for Preventing Accidents at 100,000 selected worksites.

The government revealed its plan to reduce accident casualties by 10,000 this year by controlling the three major occupational accidents, i.e. falls, crushing, and tripping, and by checking vulnerable worksites.

According to the 2009 accident prevention program announced on January 28, the Ministry of Labor will select, and check 100,200 worksites engaged in 22 high-risk sectors, i.e. 17 manufacturing sectors, six construction, and five others. The Ministry will focus on preventing accidents this year by fully implementing a series of political means, including the provision of training, technical and financial support, inspection, and supervision.

In this context, the Ministry plans to spend this year a total of 195.5 billion won with 100 billion won earmarked for facility improvement loans, 74 billion won for clean workplace projects, and 21.5 billion won for technical support.

The reason why the government is pushing such a large-scale accident prevention program is that because the accident rate has remained stagnant at 0.7% since 2000, the government intends to create a new turning point for the reduction of occupational accidents.

At the same time, this is part of the government's mid and long-term strategy to reduce within 5 years the number of the three most frequently occurring accidents to approximately 20,000 - half of 40,000 cases in 2007.

The Ministry of Labor explained that since enterprises are expected to reduce investment in accident prevention due to the recent economic downturn, it plans to significantly expand support for the workplaces employing fewer than 50 workers.

The number of workplaces under the control will be significantly rise to 100,200 from 10,800 last year. To effectively choose workplaces subject to control, the government introduced a scientific method where such workplaces are selected after categorizing worksites according to industry, scale, and types and analyzing causes of the accidents rather than having the government officials select them randomly.

It also plans to maximize efficiency of the prevention program accident prevention by focusing all training, technology, and financial support to the workplaces under the control.

- Labor Ministry, Better Health for Migrant Workers
 - Health Certificates Health Consultation in 10 Languages

The government is planning to offer translation services for medical check-ups of migrant workers, who are highly exposed to work-related accidents and diseases along with newly-hired employees and senior workers. On January 23, the Ministry of Labor announced that as part of the central government's policy to improve welfare for the underprivileged, it would issue health certificates in 10 languages for migrant workers. Therefore, non-Korean workers are expected to check their health without language difficulties. These foreign-language health certificates will be available at 127 medical check-up centers for workers, the National Health Insurance Corporation, and five offices of the Korea Migrants' Center. The certificates can also be printed out on the web. As a follow-up measure of medical check-ups, foreign workers are currently receiving home-visiting health consultations on a monthly basis organized by the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency. "Thanks to foreign-language health certificates, non-Korean employees will be able to understand the results of their health check-ups without language problems and protect themselves from occupational diseases," said Director General Hyon-ok, Jeong of the Occupational Safety and Health Bureau. Migrant workers in Korea have received both general health examinations and special ones for occupational diseases on a regular basis. However, the results have been only in Korean. According to the Labor Ministry' statistics released on November, over 100 foreign employees are affected by work-related diseases out of above 470,000 annually. Worse yet, a growing number of non-Korean workers are suffering from exposure to lethal chemicals: a death case of TCE exposure in

2006 and a DMF exposure case in 2008. Among 138 immigrant workers with occupational diseases, approximately 20 died in 2007.

- Protect Workers from Asbestos at Demolition Sites.
 - Amendment Passed National Assembly

During the 1970's and 1980's, asbestos was used for construction. Since buildings are now old, many are being dismantled. Against this backdrop an asbestos control system has been recently established whereby, if no prior inspection is conducted to determine the existence of asbestos, the government may order that demolition be stopped until additional safety inspections are implemented.

The Ministry of Labor said on January 29 that since the amendment of Occupational Safety and Health Act designed to protect workers from asbestos at building demolition and removal sites passed the Cabinet Council will become law upon presidential approval.

The amendment makes it compulsory to check the existence and amount of asbestos in advance through professional inspection agencies prior to demolishing and removing buildings and facilities of the types and sizes prescribed by the Presidential Decree. If an inspection shows the existence of asbestos exceeding a specified level, the asbestos must first be removed by the professional asbestos removal agencies before demolishing and removing other parts of the building.

The amendment further stipulates that if no prior asbestos inspection is conducted, the government may issue an order to stop the work until the results of the inspection are reported, and the building remover shall comply with the work standards prescribed by the Ministry of Labor Decree to protect workers involved in building demolition and removal.

The amendment also obligates the owner to check and remove risks at workplaces so that management can cultivate a voluntary safety management commitment at workplaces. The system of designating safety and health training institutes has been rescinded and any training institutes meeting the specified requirements can provide training.

To promote early diagnosis of occupational diseases, the diagnostic ability of special health check-up institutions is comprehensively assessed and the results disclosed.

"Through this amendment, exposure to asbestos now can be controlled more effectively, and we can protect workers from asbestos," said Jeong Hyeon-ok, head of the Occupational Safety and Health Bureau of the Ministry of Labor.

- Big Box Retailer Busy arranging chairs for employees.
 - Labor Minister Pats Employees on their Back.

A growing number of businesses are arranging chairs for cashiers and sales clerks, which is supported by the government.

The Ministry of Labor provided chairs to 111 stores for employees who spend most of the day standing at work, such as cashiers out of 427 stores operated by 15 large retailers. The Ministry plans to expand the program to cover the entire stores within this year.

E-mart - Korea's largest retailer - has built chairs for cashiers at its four branches.

In addition, four other retailers have installed anti-fatigue mats and provided physical exercise sessions and two others have offered workers medical check-ups for musculoskeletal diseases.

E-Mart and Shinsegae Co., Ltd. are also expected to introduce cash desks with chairs for new and remodeled stores.

Since the Ministry of Labor established the health program for employees who work while standing in August 2008, it has continuously made efforts to spread the provision of chairs by holding meetings with store owners and providing manager training.

Last October, the Ministry of Labor held a meeting with large department stores where the owners were urged to improve the working environment for employees who work while standing and establish a plan to upgrade the working conditions on a voluntary basis.

Minister of Labor Lee Young-hee on February 16 visited E-Mart's Seongsu branch, which has been recognized as an exemplary model for improving the working environment. The Minister tested upgraded cash desks, tried them while listening to the opinions of workers at the site and shared various opinions with the employees.

- Compulsory Submission of Toxic Chemical Data.
 - Ministry of Environment Announces 'Chemical Management Program

The government has announced a plan to obligate workplaces to submit data on toxic chemicals to protect the health of workers through appropriate safety management.

The Ministry of Environment announced on February 11 a chemical management program after holding Chemical Management Advancement Forum, with representatives of the government, the academia, and the industry.

According to the Ministry of Environment, the types of chemicals and the amount of distribution have increased recently. Against this backdrop, international regulations on chemicals have been strengthened. Nevertheless, there is a wide gap between domestic chemical control and advanced countries in terms of risk assessment. The Ministry therefore established the program to protect the public and the environment from toxic chemicals and to enhance competitiveness in the chemical industry.

According to the program, the Ministry will make it compulsory for workplaces to submit data on the toxicity of the specified chemicals used at the site and information on exposure. It will also implement Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) at worksites lacking related infrastructure to nurture 600 experts by 2013.

However, compulsory submission of related information is limited to the manufactured or imported highly toxic materials weighing more than 100 tons. More specific measures will be taken considering international trends and domestic corporate circumstances after 2012.

At the same time, the government plans to ease the current restrictions on chemicals and provide information on the limitations to enterprises so that related industries can prepare safety measures in advance.

- **KOSHA News**

- KOSHA Protects Workers' Health at SMEs
 - Financial Support for worksites with Hazardous Processes

The government plans to provide financial support to protect health of workers and improve the work environment by reducing physically demanding workloads and exposure of noise, dust, and toxic chemicals at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Recently, the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) has announced a financial support program to improve the work environment of SMEs dealing with high-risk processes.

The program supports funds for facilities and equipment needed to improve safety at work. Eligible workplaces are those employing 50~300 workers covered by accident compensation insurance regardless of sectors and non-manufacturing workplaces with less than 50 workers.

Items eligible for support include soundproof or sound absorption facilities, and noise prevention facilities, dust collectors and vehicles for heavy material including about 60 kinds of electric forklifts. The program will also support treadmills and other exercise machines for workers, work stands with

adjustable heights and angles and transport equipment.

A maximum of 50% of the total cost for eligible items will be provided to workplaces having 50 to 300 workers or up to 50 million won per workplace, and 50% or up to 30 million won for workplaces having less than 50 workers.

When a workplace applies for financial support, KOSHA visits the workplace and holds a consultation session to discuss the work environment. The workplace then submits an investment plan. KOSHA then examines the improvement plan, and provides financial support.

To receive support, workplaces may download the application at www.kosha.or.kr and submit it to KOSHA or send it via fax.

From 2004 to 2008, KOSHA provided financial support of 35.6 billion won to 2,165 workplaces through the program. Last year, a total of 10 billion won was offered to approximately 530 workplaces. This year, KOSHA plans to add stools for employees who work while standing, work desks and footrests to the list of support items with additional fund worth about 10 billion won.

"This year, we have added the word 'health' to the agency's name - the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency, which shows our commitment to protecting workers' health," said Park Jung-sun, Director of KOSHA's Department of Occupational health. She called for concerted efforts to build an ideal work environment and prevent occupational diseases through the program."

- **Leading Role in Halving Occupational Accident Rate**
 - **OSHRI Presented Five Priorities for 2009**

The Occupational Safety and Health Research Institute (OSHRI) an affiliated research center of the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency has announced its annual management plan aimed at taking the initiative in securing safety and health at work. The institute's yearly plan has five priorities as follows:

- **conduct research to halve the three major occupational accidents**
- **carry out epidemiological research in response to major social issues**
- **implement a preliminary study for policy-making by the Labor Ministry**
- **build a management system and institutional measures in response to the government's new policy on chemical materials**
- **enhance the safety certification and inspection system**

To reach its first goal, a 50 percent drop of the major accidents, the institute is planning to do

research on the following:

- prevention of conveyer fall accidents at construction sites (2 papers)
- a safety system to prevent conveyer crushing accidents
- tripping risk caused by contaminants on the floor
- safety engineering policies and research risk posed by press machines and the machinery&s structural improvement

To contribute to improvement of related policies and institutions, OSHRI is scheduled to present six papers on criminal litigation systems for occupational safety violation around the world, organize policy forums, and publish news letters.

As part of its R&D effort related to chemicals at industrial sites, the institute will issue papers on:

- work patterns and risks at semiconductor plants (4 papers)
- epidemiology for prevention (10 papers)
- classification system for chemicals in line with global standards and runaway reaction analysis (6 papers)

Moreover, OSHRI will support a case study of occupational epidemiology, management of special medical examination for occupational diseases, and efficient process of statistics.

- OSHRI, Korea's First Lab to Meet All Int'l Standards to Conduct Dust Explosion Tests.

The Occupational Safety & Health Research Institute announced on February 20 that it had been awarded certification from the Korea Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (KOLAS) and become the nation's first internationally recognized testing laboratory entitled to conduct dust explosion tests.

This certification is related to the testing standards covering ‘Dust explosions’ and ‘Heat stability’, the institute - an affiliated research center of the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) - in the first to meet the latter standard.

The certification on testing standards is granted when the testing equipment, laboratory facility and environment, and the qualifications of researchers are comprehensively assessed and meet international standards.

The certification acquired by the institute this time covers six testing standards, i.e. two standards on heat stability and four standards on dust explosions as prescribed by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and European standards (EN).

KOSHA has thus far been internationally recognized to meet 24 testing standards including the

existing 13 testing standards on physics and chemistry and five standards covering fires and explosions.

With this certification, KOSHA has acquired international trust in performing fire and explosion tests and heat stability tests. This has provided a new opportunity to perform official tests and conduct research on fires and explosions.

"The certification acquired this time is for the tests in which KOSHA is specialized. Since it is Korea's first certified testing facility, we will make more efforts to prevent fires and explosions at workplaces through professional research," said Yang Jeong-seon, Director of the Center for Chemicals Safety and Health of KOSHA.

- KOSHA Implements WORK HEMS 2009
 - Integration Data system of Working Conditions and Occupational Health.

A new data system is soon to be distributed to handle both work conditions and employees' medical data.

The Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) on February 12 that, to effectively manage the results of work environment inspections and special medical check-ups, it would build the WORK HEMS 2009 program.

Thanks to the integration of the two types of data, more systematic support to improve work conditions and employees' health will be provided.

KOSHA also plans to use the program to provide financial support for the work environment checks scheduled to begin in March covering workplaces with less than ten workers and the occupational medical check-ups to be conducted starting in July.

- A New MSDS Editing Program to be Built in PC
 - KOSHA Demonstrates How to Use

The specific method of using the 'MSDS-Editing program' which systematically delivers toxicity information on chemicals has been delivered to related persons at each workplace. Usage of the MSDS-Editing Program, a database on toxic chemicals, is to be shown at workplaces.

The Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) is planning to provide demonstration of the program for employees from the chemical manufacturers and importers and experts in occupational safety and health.

The 'MSDS-Editing program' is an online database built and supplied by KOSHA to enable systematic management of the toxicity of chemicals.

The demonstration will include how to fill out the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) by type of chemicals, to print out warning sign, and use summary and classification functions.

KOSHA will also introduce a 'PC-type MSDS-Editing program' that allows a chemical management program to be installed on the computer. The previous system required access to KOSHA's homepage.

Admission is free of charge. KOSHA will provide training manuals on chemical management policies and the use of the GHS system and the MSDS-Editing program.

"With the upgrade of this MSDS-Editing program, MSDS information on the GHS system rose from 1,000 to 6,000 chemicals," said Yang Jeong-seon, Director of the Chemical Safety and Health Center. "It is expected that the increased user-friendliness will be of great help in protecting the health of workers handling chemicals and in preparing for the GHS system scheduled to be expanded in July 2010."

- **Statistics**

- Number of Occupational Diseases Significantly Reduced from Last Year.
 - The Ministry of Labor Announced Statistics on Occupational Accidents.

According to statistics as of the end of November last year released by the Ministry of Labor, the number of occupational diseases and patients went down sharply.

The statistics show, the number of patients suffering from occupational diseases fell by 1,757 to 8,940 - a 16.4% year-on-year decrease. The occurrence of occupational diseases stood at 0.06% - a 25% drop from last year. (0.02% points)

In particular, there were significant decreases in the work-related musculoskeletal diseases, cerebrovascular diseases and back pain. This appears to be attributable to KOSHA's occupational disease prevention activities last year.

To establish a voluntary musculoskeletal disease preventive system, the Ministry of Labor investigated elements of harm at the workplaces vulnerable to musculoskeletal diseases and performed inspections to determine whether the preventive program was being properly executed.

The Ministry carried out a variety of health protection measures for workers by supporting prevention technologies and distributing manuals to related workplaces to construct infrastructure

for the prevention of cerebrovascular diseases and stress at work.

The accident rate was 0.64%, a 0.01% year-on-year decrease, and the number of casualties increased by 4,635 to 87,627 from last year.

Currently, the entire workforce of the Korea Economy stand, at 13.79million, a rise by about 1 million from 12.79million.

The manufacturing industry showed the highest rate of occupational accidents (37.3%). In addition, worksites with five to 49 employees witnessed accidents most frequently - 46.2% of the total.

By age, workers aged from 45 to 49, workersaged 45~49 recorded the highest number of accidents. By type of accidents, overturning took 19.2% while back pain accounted for 5.4%.

- **Special Events**

- KOSHA, Joint Workshop with other Certification Agencies
 - Venue for Efficient Measures to Prevent Accidents at Work through Certification System.

On Thursday, January 29, KOSHA (Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency) held a joint workshop with other certification agencies on the safety and health management system at the head office. About 20 experts from eight certification agencies from home and abroad attended.

At the workshop, three overseas certification agencies (BSI, DNV and BVQI) that have concluded a joint certification agreement with KOSHA, and five domestic certification agencies (Korea Quality Assurance, Korean Foundation For Quality, Korean Standards Association, Korea Productivity Center Quality Assurance and Korean Register of Shipping) presented their 2009 operation plans and discussed ways of improving and expanding the certification examinations.

Items discussed include expansion of the safety and health management system certification, provision of mutual training to nurture certification-related inspectors, identification of good workplaces that have won KOSHA 18001 certification, and provision of educational support at the morning meeting of joint certification agencies. The participants agreed that the number of certified workplaces would be doubled from 100 to 200 and that KOSHA would provide support for training to CEOs, the joint agencies offer education programs for executives during their breakfast meetings.

The system aims to encourage enterprises to voluntarily build safe and health measures to prevent accidents and losses and devise action plans and rules.

Since 1999, KOSHA has been inspecting the safety and health management system of workplaces at

their request, and when the system is proven sound, the agency issues KOSHA 18001 Certification.

In 1999, KOSHA concluded a joint certification agreement with the three overseas certification agencies to help domestic exporters acquire certifications in foreign nations. Last October, KOSHA reached an agreement with the five domestic certification agencies to jointly issue certification for the safety and health management system.

"Ways of qualitatively improving certification-related inspections were sought at this workshop held by the joint certification agencies. There were other important discussions aimed at expanding the safety and health management system at domestic workplaces" said Kwon Hyeok-myeon, head of the Technical Experts Department of KOSHA.

- Research on Skyscrapers
 - Lotte EC... Hosting the International Symposium on High-rises

High-rise building experts from home and abroad will have an opportunity to gather and share their experiences and knowledge and discuss the Busan Lotte World Construction Project. Lotte E&C held the 4th International Symposium of the Construction Technology Research Center for Tall Buildings with the topic of Future System & Compact City, Busan Lotte World at APEC Hall in BEXCO (Busan Exhibition & Convention Center) on the 19th. The symposium will discuss the Future System, which embraces structure, material, planning and disaster prevention, and the concept of Compact City - a new paradigm for skyscrapers. At the symposium, high-rise building experts from home and abroad will make presentations on Busan Lotte World and Tall Building Construction, Modern Trends and the Future of Tall Building Construction, Efficient Disaster Prevention Systems for Tall Building Construction Concerning Residential Functions and Evacuation, Study on Lotte E&C's Key Technologies for Tall Building Construction, the Today and Tomorrow of High Strength Concrete for Tall Building Structures, and Current and Future Technological Trends in Tall Building Structures.

- **New Publications**

- Manual for Preventing Occupational Musculoskeletal Disorders
 - KOSHA Provided Guidelines and Checklist

The manual for preventing musculoskeletal disorders among workers engaged in occupations such as building cleaner, garbage collectors, cashiers, office workers, drivers, and repairmen will be released. On January 22nd, the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) announced its plan to provide an online operation manual that explains the types of musculoskeletal diseases commonly found in five industrial sectors and preventive measures. The five sectors specified in the manual are building management, hygiene services, finance and insurance, education, and the automobile transportation industry. The section for 'building management' presents advice on floor mopping, waxing, and separate collection, as well as window cleaning methods, suggesting the use

of a bucket with wheels and a squeezer when cleaning the floor, the use of anti-vibration gloves when using a waxing machine, and the use of a ladder and cleaning tools when cleaning windows. KOSHA also provides guidelines and a checklist to help workers routinely establish a program for preventing musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace. The manual can be downloaded from the KOSHA homepage > 'Health Program' > 'Musculoskeletal disorders Prevention Support' in the PDF format. According to industrial accident statistics, there were a total of 7,723 musculoskeletal patients in 2007, with 805 of them engaged in the five industries, which represents around 10% of the total musculoskeletal patients. In particular, the number of musculoskeletal patients in the five industries mentioned increased by 266 patients compared to 2006 continuing its constant rise.

- Occupational Disease Prevention Guideline

- Labor Ministry Developed Training Manual, Containing Regulations on Healthcare

A guideline for healthcare managers has recently been released, to help prevent cerebro-cardiovascular diseases, the most common causes of death among occupational diseases. On January 9th, the Ministry of Labor announced that they had developed a Workplace Health Care Operation Manual, an operation manual for healthcare managers who are in charge of protecting worker's health, as well as the Training Manual for Cerebro-cardiovascular Disease Prevention. The manuals aim to strengthen workplace healthcare regimes after the sudden spate of accidental deaths among workers of Hankook Tire last year. Healthcare managers requested the guidebook to be convenient to apply in the field. The Manual is a guidebook that can be used as a reference book for healthcare managers. It introduces the regulations that must be observed in the workplace in order to manage health, as well as explaining specific methods for managing the work environment, how to investigate, evaluate, and prevent occupational disease, how to plan health education and manage the results, and how to develop a workplace health improvement regime in detail.