

Occupational safety

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Guide for employers on occupational safety

Contract with an occupational safety specialist or a competent specialist/institution



According to the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Law, every company must have a person responsible for addressing occupational safety issues.

An occupational safety specialist is an employee of the company whose duties include organizing and controlling occupational safety measures and conducting internal monitoring of the work environment. This specialist must have appropriate knowledge in occupational safety (as specified in Section II of Cabinet Regulation No. 749 of 10.08.2010 "Procedure for Training in Occupational Safety Matters"). The employer can appoint an existing employee as the occupational safety specialist, who would carry out these duties in addition to their regular responsibilities, or they can hire a separate employee or multiple employees dedicated entirely to addressing occupational safety issues. Thus, an occupational safety specialist can be any employee (employed under a labor contract), including the employer or a representative of the employer, provided they have acquired the necessary knowledge in occupational safety. The employer can also involve a competent institution and qualified specialists for internal monitoring of the work environment and other occupational safety services. For companies operating in hazardous industries, according to Cabinet Regulation No. 99 of 08.02.2005 "Regulations on Business Types in which the Employer Involves a Competent Institution," a competent institution must be involved in the creation and maintenance of the occupational safety system. These regulations also specify cases when the employer may not involve a competent institution (see Sections 5, 5.1, and 5.2 of the mentioned regulations).

However, it is important to emphasize that the employer's responsibility is not limited by the duties of employees or the competent institution or specialists in the field of occupational safety—i.e., the employer is ultimately responsible for the safety and health of employees at work.



DA organizatoriskās struktūras izveides varianti 

Employee training, registry of training



The procedure for training employees in occupational safety matters is specified in Cabinet Regulation No. 749 of 10.08.2010, "Procedure for Training in Occupational Safety Matters."

The employer must organize training during working hours, allocating sufficient time for a complete and high-quality presentation of the material, mastering practical methods and techniques, as well as testing knowledge.

Information about employee induction training and on-site briefings must be recorded in documents that contain the information specified in Annexes 3 and 4 of Cabinet Regulation No. 749 of 10.08.2010, "Procedure for Training in Occupational Safety Matters."

The documentation of occupational safety processes, including the registration of information about employee training, may be done electronically by the employer, with parties signing the documents in accordance with regulations governing electronic documents (Electronic Documents Law). The employer must ensure that state supervisory and control authorities can access the electronic documents related to occupational safety and verify their authenticity and integrity. In case of a dispute, the employer is obliged to prove that the requirements for electronic documents and electronic signatures have been met according to the regulatory requirements.

 [Apmācību iedalījums](#) 

Occupational safety instructions, registry of instructions



When developing occupational safety instructions, the employer must adhere to the minimum content and structure requirements outlined in Annex 2 of Cabinet Regulation No. 749 of 10.08.2010, "Procedure for Training in Occupational Safety Matters." If necessary, the structure and content of the instructions can be expanded based on the specific conditions of the particular workplace. The occupational safety instructions should include the following key topics: general requirements; occupational safety requirements for starting, performing, and ending work; and occupational safety requirements in emergency situations.

The employer is required to approve the developed instructions, following the guidelines set out in Section 3.3 of Cabinet Regulation No. 558 of 07.09.2018, "Procedure for Document Development and Formatting." The approval must be signed by an authorized person from the organization, who signs the document being approved. The approval is formalized with an approval statement that includes the word "Approved," the full title of the official, the personal signature and its deciphering, the date of the approval signature, and the seal impression (if applicable).

Assessment of workplace risk factors



Internal workplace monitoring is conducted according to the procedure established in Cabinet Regulation No. 660 of October 2, 2007, "Procedure for Internal Workplace Monitoring" by an occupational safety specialist appointed by the employer or by the employer themselves, if the employer is authorized to perform the duties of an occupational safety

specialist according to regulatory requirements. If the company does not have an appropriate occupational safety specialist, the employer must involve a competent specialist or institution in workplace safety issues, appointing a person responsible for occupational safety within the company.

When assessing workplace risks, the employer ensures:

1. ****Examination of the Workplace and Work Types****: The workplace and the types of work are inspected to identify existing workplace factors and determine factors that pose or may pose risks to employees' safety and health, using the form specified in Annex 1 of Cabinet Regulation No. 660 of October 2, 2007.

The specified form in Annex 1 may not be used if other documents more suited to the company's operational nature are used, provided they cover all workplace factors listed in Annex 1 of the regulation.

The inspection of the workplace, identifying existing risk factors, involves understanding processes (e.g., equipment operation, chemicals and mixtures used), reviewing the actual situation, interviewing and involving employees, and thoroughly understanding each process.

2. ****Measurement of Workplace Factors****: Measurements are conducted to determine whether workplace factors pose risks to employees' safety and health. These measurements clarify the risk level and the compliance of workplace risk factors with regulatory requirements. Interpretation of laboratory measurement results helps assess potential impacts on employees' health. Measurements are carried out not only to evaluate potential impacts but also to better plan necessary occupational safety measures, prioritize them, and correctly choose suitable personal protective equipment and define the scope of employees exposed to specific risk factors. If laboratory measurement results do not exceed set limit values, they can confirm that the existing occupational safety system and preventive measures are adequate to prevent harmful effects on employees' health and safety.

In certain cases, measurements may be performed by the occupational safety specialist or company representative using indicative measuring devices. For example, measurements of lighting, microclimate (air temperature, relative humidity, air velocity) to ensure compliance with requirements specified in Annexes 1, 2, and 3 of Cabinet Regulation No. 359 of April 28, 2009, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Workplaces." It is important to regularly verify the indicative measuring devices, which can be done at metrological centers in Latvia and abroad. If such devices are not available, measurements can be conducted by certified specialists, competent institutions, and accredited laboratories using registered and calibrated measuring equipment.

Instances where accredited testing laboratories are required for workplace measurements are specified in the following regulations:

- Cabinet Regulation No. 284 of April 13, 2004, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Employee Protection Against Vibration Risks in the Workplace";
- Cabinet Regulation No. 325 of May 15, 2007, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Exposure to Chemicals in Workplaces";
- Cabinet Regulation No. 66 of February 4, 2003, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Employee Protection Against Workplace Noise Risks";
- Cabinet Regulation No. 803 of September 29, 2008, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Exposure to Carcinogenic Substances in Workplaces";
- Cabinet Regulation No. 852 of October 12, 2004, "Occupational Safety Requirements for Working with Asbestos".

Measurements can be conducted by accredited laboratories of the Latvian National Accreditation Bureau, which also accredits specific methods for various risk factors.

It is important to note that results from workplace risk assessments and measurements should be stored and later archived. For instance, electromagnetic field measurement results should be kept for 10 years before archiving; vibration

measurements should be kept for at least 45 years before archiving; and noise measurements should also be kept for at least 45 years before archiving. Since occupational diseases caused by various workplace factors may develop only after several years, retaining measurement results is crucial.

3. ****Assessment of Workplace Factors****: The assessment involves considering factors that pose or may pose risks to employees' safety and health, including:

- Workplace layout and arrangement;
- Choice and use of work equipment;
- Effects of physical, chemical, psychological, biological, physiological, and other workplace factors;
- Choice and use of work and production methods, as well as the organization of work processes and working hours;
- Insufficient professional training and instruction of employees, including in occupational safety;
- Overall conditions.

There are various risk assessment methods available globally, ranging from simple to complex, and it is challenging to specify the exact method you should choose for your company. The choice is up to you and the specialist to whom you have entrusted this responsibility.

To help employers comply with regulatory requirements, the State Labour Inspectorate, in cooperation with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, has developed an online interactive tool called OiRA (Online Interactive Risk Assessment). This tool allows employers without specific safety training to identify workplace factors and assess the risk of employee harm or illness. The tool helps determine necessary occupational safety measures and prepare required documentation (risk assessment and safety action plan). Currently, 26 tools have been developed in Latvian for various sectors (e.g., office work, educational institutions, retail, agriculture, cleaning, public catering, hotels, and guesthouses).

When assessing workplace risks, the person conducting the assessment considers:

- The probability of risk occurrence (duration, frequency) and the severity of potential consequences, taking into account all workplace factors that pose or may pose risks to employees' safety and health, their possible interactions, and the results of workplace measurements;
- Existing interactions between employees and their activities in the company;
- Presence of other people (e.g., employees of other companies, visitors, students, patients from medical institutions, clients) in the workplace;
- Workplace accidents and identified occupational diseases.

Based on the results of the risk assessment and information obtained from workplace inspections, the employer determines the necessary occupational safety measures to prevent or reduce workplace risks, such as providing personal protective equipment, conducting mandatory health checks, training employees, and replacing work equipment.

The employer implements occupational safety measures according to the following general principles:

- Design the workplace to avoid or minimize unavoidable risks;
- Eliminate the causes of workplace risks;
- Adapt work to the individual, primarily regarding workplace layout, equipment, and choice of work and production methods, with special attention to reducing monotonous work and work with a predetermined rhythm to mitigate its negative impact on health;
- Consider developments in technology, hygiene, and medicine;
- Replace hazardous conditions with safer or less hazardous ones;
- Develop a coordinated and comprehensive system of occupational safety measures;
- Prefer collective safety measures over individual measures;
- Eliminate risks to employees who are subject to special protection according to regulations;
- Provide instruction and training in occupational safety;

- Cooperate with employees and their representatives in occupational safety matters.

Workplace risk assessments should be conducted at least once a year, as well as:

- When starting a new type of activity;
- If there are changes in the workplace (e.g., changes in work processes, methods, equipment, substances, and mixtures used or produced, significant reorganization of the workplace);
- If there is a deterioration in workplace conditions or non-compliance with regulatory requirements;
- If an accident has occurred at work.

During repeated risk assessments, the person conducting the assessment organizes additional measurements, considering the results of previous assessments and regulatory requirements for measurement frequency. Repeated measurements are not required if the results of previous measurements suffice.

During repeated risk assessments, the person conducting the assessment reviews previous assessment results and, if the situation has not changed and the previous results are still valid, new risk assessment documentation may not be developed, but notes on the current situation may be made in the existing risk assessment.

The employer informs all employees and representatives or employee representatives about the results of the risk assessment, conclusions drawn, the occupational safety action plan, and the measures taken or to be taken.

All materials related to workplace inspections (including identification of workplace factors and risk assessments) must be kept by the employer for at least 3 years.

Occupational safety measures plan



Based on the results of the workplace risk assessment and the information obtained from workplace inspections, the employer is responsible for developing an occupational safety action plan. This plan should outline the safety measures, their implementation deadlines, and the individuals responsible for risk prevention or reduction. When determining and implementing occupational safety measures to prevent or reduce workplace risks, the employer must ensure that the risk is not transferred to another location or that new risks are not created.

The employer is responsible for the timely execution of these safety measures and must evaluate their effectiveness.

The employer must keep the occupational safety action plan for at least 3 years.

Work involving special risks



According to Section 19 of Article 1 of the Occupational Safety and Health Law and the first part of Article 66 of the Labour Law, work associated with special risks is defined as work that, according to the workplace risk assessment, involves increased psychological or physical strain or increased risk to the employee's safety and health, which cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through other safety measures.

Based on the results of the workplace risk assessment and the information obtained from workplace inspections, the employer identifies employees who are exposed to special risks. This means that the employer (or occupational safety specialist) determines which employees are exposed to special risks independently, based on the results of the workplace risk assessment.

Workplace risks can be mitigated through various technical or organizational measures (e.g., providing collective or individual protective equipment, ensuring rest breaks, etc.). Special risks can be reduced by altering the employee's duties to prevent them from working under special risk conditions for the entire day. If the risk assessment reveals that certain workplaces involve increased psychological or physical strain or increased risk to employee safety and health, which cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by other safety measures, such as by shortening the work time exposed to such special risks, the employer must ensure the following obligations: establish the standard shortened working hours (Section 3 of Article 131 of the Labour Law), provide additional breaks (Section 6 of Article 145 of the Labour Law), grant additional leave (Subsection 2 of the first part of Article 151 of the Labour Law), and set a risk allowance for work associated with special risks (first part of Article 66 of the Labour Law).

Mandatory health examinations



The procedure for mandatory health examinations is defined in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219 "Procedure for Mandatory Health Examinations" dated March 10, 2009.

Mandatory health examinations for employees are carried out by a physician certified in occupational diseases. The employer must send the following employees for mandatory health examinations:

- Employees whose health is affected or could be affected by harmful workplace environmental factors (Appendix 1 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219);
- Employees working under special conditions (Appendix 2 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219).

Employees must be sent for mandatory health examinations by a directive from the employer, who or his authorized person must also prepare a mandatory health examination form in 2 copies (one copy to be kept by the doctor, the other to be returned to the employer after the examination). The employer sets a specific time for periodic and additional (extraordinary) health examinations, not less than four weeks and not more than three months.

Mandatory health examinations are categorized as follows:

- Initial: Conducted before employees start work.
- Periodic: Conducted periodically, depending on the harmful factors in the workplace and their potential impact.
- Extraordinary (additional):
 - When harmful workplace environmental factors change or there have been changes in working conditions, or if

increased concentration of harmful factors is detected, etc.;

- If the employee develops health issues that could have been caused by the harmful factor;
- At the employer's initiative, to ensure that the employee's health is suitable for the work being performed, including in cases of long-term or frequent incapacity for work;
- At the recommendation of the occupational safety specialist or trust person, if there is reason to believe that harmful workplace environmental factors are adversely affecting the employee's health.

The frequency of periodic health examinations (once every 3 years, 2 years, or 1 year) depends on:

- The specific harmful factor or its degree of impact;
- The special conditions of the work.

Costs related to mandatory health examinations of employees are covered as follows:

- Before the start of the employment relationship, costs are borne by the relevant party or the employer by mutual agreement;
- After the start of the employment relationship, costs are borne by the employer.

Mandatory health examinations for employees employed for a fixed term – if an employee is to be employed by the employer for less than 1 year, the person must be sent for a health examination before the start of the employment relationship if the work is to be performed:

- Under special conditions (Appendix 2 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219); or
- If the workplace conditions meet the criteria specified in sub-point 14.3 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219 (cases when periodic health examinations must be conducted once a year).

Mandatory health examinations for employees under 18 years old – if the employer employs a person under 18 years old who is obtaining education at an educational institution for a fixed period (during school breaks) not exceeding three months, the health examination can be waived according to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 219, if the employer requests and receives a certificate from a family doctor regarding the individual's health condition.

The employer must keep health examination records for at least 10 years (or 40 years in certain cases, such as exposure to asbestos or carcinogenic substances). After that, they should be transferred to the archive in accordance with the requirements set by regulations on document retention and archiving.

Based on the results of the workplace risk assessment and the information obtained from workplace inspections, the employer must compile lists and other documents related to internal monitoring of the work environment (these lists and documents can be combined into one or more lists or documents):

- A list (document) including the risk factors in the work environment, and the protective measures used to eliminate or reduce these risks (Appendices 1 and 2 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 372 "Occupational Safety Requirements for Using Personal Protective Equipment" and Appendix 1 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 310 "Occupational Safety Requirements in Forestry");
- A list of employees exposed to occupational health risks (sub-point 31.5 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 330 "Vaccination Regulations");
- A list of employees exposed to biological agents, if the work involves agents from groups 3 and 4 (sub-point 22.1 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 189 "Occupational Safety Requirements for Exposure to Biological Agents");
- A list of work equipment that may pose an increased risk to employee safety and health, such as hazardous machinery (sub-point 84 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 526 "Occupational Safety Requirements for Using Work Equipment");
- A list of chemicals and mixtures used at work (or other documents), and a list of workplaces and work processes (or other documents) where chemicals and mixtures present or could present risks to employee safety and health (sub-point 11 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 325 "Occupational Safety Requirements for Exposure to Chemicals in the Workplace");
- A list of employees who are exposed to carcinogens (sub-point 20 of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 803 "Occupational Safety Requirements for Exposure to Carcinogens in the Workplace").

Depending on the specific work of the company, additional specific documents may be required, such as safety data sheets if the company deals with chemicals and mixtures, or instructions for working at heights if work is performed at height, etc.

The employer is responsible for investigating work-related accidents and keeping records in accordance with the procedures set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 950 "Procedure for Investigating and Recording Work Accidents" dated August 25, 2009. Accidents for which a report has been drawn up must be recorded and registered in the work accident record book.

The employer must keep the accident investigation reports and investigation materials for 45 years. After that, they should be transferred to the archive in accordance with the regulations on document retention and archiving.