



2025
Industry report

Health and Safety Development Prospects

in the Office Environment

**Experts' analysis
and recommendations**

Report created in collaboration with:

 **Santander**

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 **PAŃSTWOWA INSPEKCJA PRACY**

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2025 Industry report

Health and Safety development prospects in the office environment

Experts' analysis and recommendations

The report is based on speeches and workshops with health and safety experts at the 2nd edition of **the meeting of OHS experts in the office setting**, held on November 12, 2024

Interviews with experts, included in the report, conducted on December 13-15, 2024

A collective copyright work edited by **Małgorzata Furtak**

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Introduction

Where is OHS going on? Safe and Healthy Workplace 2025+

DOROTA STROJKOWSKA
Chief Human Resources Officer
Santander Bank Polska S.A

Responsibility for workplace health and safety rests with the employer. Truism? Perhaps. But one that should be repeated over and over.

Management board members, as company leaders, have an obligation to ensure the safety of employees.

In practice, this means that we must create appropriate working conditions in accordance with current occupational health and safety laws. We need to keep track of technical condition of infrastructure and equipment, train employees on occupational health and safety, and respond to any irregularities and threats at work.

On the one hand, the Labour Code requires that we eliminate any situations that might pose a threat to the life or health of employees.

On the other hand, there is a number of practices – less obvious and less frequent – that go beyond legal requirements. Here we are talking about anticipating or even shaping trends in workplace health and safety.

As a modern and responsible employer, Santander Bank Polska initiated and had the honour to host the “Meeting of OHS Experts for Administrative and Office Workers” for the second year in a row.

I would like to thank the organiser of this event and its participants who shared their experience and jointly developed the recommendations that we are happy to present in this publication.

I trust that this will be a valuable reading for anyone who cares about building better workplaces!





There is no overstating the value of experience sharing among experts

Robert Lisicki

Attorney-at-law, Head of the Labour Department at the Polish Lewiatan Confederation

The role of organisations such as Lewiatan is to represent the interests of employers in Poland and the European Union, and to ensure sustainable economic growth, better laws, healthy competition, increased employment and the strengthening of social capital.

The regular “Meeting of OHS Experts” perfectly fits this agenda. As well as an opportunity for experts and OHS practitioners to reflect and exchange experiences, the event is a forum for intensive work on recommendations that take into account market trends, new legal requirements at the national and EU level, and the needs and expectations of workers.

I am delighted that the ideas presented by the participants of this forum have been collected and put in the form of this publication that will be shared with a wider group of OHS specialists inspiring them to apply those ideas at their organisations.

I particularly encourage you to read the overview of the multifaceted challenges facing OHS functions, both in the area of physical and mental health and in the context of new office work models, including remote and hybrid working.

Companies may be competitors in business, but are allies in workplace safety. Exchanging experiences among health and safety experts is invaluable!

People make the company

Marcin Stanecki
Chief Labour Inspector
National Labour Inspectorate

In today's world, every company must be mindful of workers' needs that go beyond what is required by the existing and new regulations. Legislation will always provide for minimum requirements to ensure lawful and safe workplaces. This is not enough today!

If we want to think of ourselves as a civilized society, we must make efforts to ensure that in the face of challenges of the modern world, amid the decreasing number of professionally active people and the growing importance of advanced technologies, we do not lose sight of human life and health, the most important value of all.

Today, it is not enough to just equip the employee and instruct them to work, say, from now to half three. In addition to the traditional risks of accidents at work, omnipresent chemicals and the development of new business models, such as platform work, the European Union recognises the need to ensure the wellbeing of employees, work-life balance, the right to disconnect, and gender equality in the workplace, whereby the value of remuneration is independent of whether the worker is a woman or man.

We also need to take those aspects into account, as otherwise we will be tired, frustrated, ineffective employees with a host of lifestyle diseases, while a well-deserved retirement will be a dream for many and a reality for few.

With its activities, the National Labour Inspectorate can support employers on their way to providing healthier and safer workplaces.





Workplace safety is a team game

Agnieszka Szczygalska
Head of the Central Institute for Labour Protection

Safety and health protection is not only an obligation, but also a value that shapes the quality of our working life and affects the functioning of entire organizations.

It is a process that requires the involvement of all participants in the labor market - from employees and employers, through research institutions, to decision-makers shaping legal regulations.

The Central Institute for Labor Protection - National Research Institute has been playing a key role in this process for years. As the leading scientific unit in Poland, CIOP-PIB not only conducts research on working conditions, but also develops innovative technical and organizational solutions, supporting companies in building effective safety strategies. Our goal is to combine scientific knowledge with practice to develop recommendations that truly improve working conditions in various sectors of the economy.

This publication is the result of a collaboration of experts from many fields – scientists and organizational leaders who face OSH challenges on a daily basis. The meeting of experts on OSH of administrative and office workers showed how valuable it is to share experiences and seek the best solutions for occupational safety.

Occupational safety is a team game, in which cooperation and knowledge sharing are crucial. I hope that this publication will contribute to the further development of safety culture in Polish organizations and help build work environments where concern for human health and life is a priority.

I wish you a fruitful reading experience and inspirational reflections.

The background features a large, solid red semi-circle on the right side. To its left, there are several concentric, curved red lines that sweep across the top and bottom of the page. On the far left, there are horizontal light blue lines. Below the red semi-circle, there is a light blue rectangular area with a rounded bottom-left corner.

Key OHS challenges and experts' recommendations

Chapter 1

Key challenges to occupational health and safety

Contemporary challenges, such as remote work, generational diversity or rapid technological changes, require OHS experts to adopt a new approach. Occupational health and safety priorities must evolve to meet the needs of the organisation and its employees.

Challenges of health and safety training in the era of hybrid work

1. Lack of time and engagement

One of the biggest problems in employee education is the lack of time, often resulting from excessive workload. Employees, especially in dynamic work environments, perceive health and safety training as a formality. As a result, they lack engagement and are reluctant to participate.

This issue may be addressed by micro-training, i.e. sessions that provide the most important information in a short, interactive form (e.g. 5-minute videos) (Van der Kolk, 2021).

2. The form and attractiveness of OHS training

Standard forms of training are often considered boring and incompatible with what employees expect today. When designing educational materials, it is a good idea to use technological advances such as:

- VR and AR technologies

One of the most promising trends is the application of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) in OHS training. VR glasses can be used to simulate realistic scenarios, such as dealing with an accident at work or giving first aid, which increases the effectiveness of learning and gets participants engaged. Research shows that the use of VR in training can increase knowledge retention by up to 75% compared to traditional methods (Anderson & Weiler, 2020).

- Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence can automate the content creation process, e.g. generate infographics, presentations, educational videos and quizzes, tailored to the needs of specific jobs. This approach saves time and resources while improving the quality of training materials.

3. Hybrid and remote work

The hybrid work model poses an additional challenge to health and safety education and the implementation of legal requirements. Office and remote workers have different needs and expectations, which requires the training content to be adapted accordingly. A possible solution is online training that fits the nature of individual jobs, as well as asynchronous consultations/training.

4. Generational diversity and a modern approach

OHS experts must take into account generational diversity in the workplace by adapting communication tools and language to different age groups. The use of video tutorials, online quizzes or mobile apps can effectively engage younger generations, while traditional forms, such as brochures, will be more suitable for older workers.

5. Paperless to beat bureaucracy

The introduction of paperless solutions in OHS documentation helps reduce costs and streamline administrative processes. Digitisation of documents, including training records and audit reports is both eco-friendly and more effective.

The role of leaders in fostering the OHS culture

1. Engagement and priorities

Managers often put occupational health and safety on a back burner, which only reflects their insufficient awareness of the responsibility they have for the safety of their teams. Surveys conducted among managers show that 60% of them are unaware of legal consequences of allowing untrained employees to work (Smith, 2019). A key step is to educate managers about their responsibilities and the benefits of getting people engaged in occupational health and safety, e.g. through webinars/ workshops with practical examples or using new technologies.

2. Budget and time

Common challenges include limited budget and managers' lack of time to participate in training.

To address these challenges, you may consider:

- Blended learning, which combines classic in-person teaching methods with innovative methods used in distance learning.
- 1:1 sessions that are shorter, more personalised and focused on the specific needs of the manager.

Communicating with employees

One of the elements of building a health and safety culture in an organisation is effective communication to employees. A well designed communication can raise awareness, improve health and safety, and build people's engagement in health-promoting activities.

1. Information overload

An avalanche of messages and a variety of communication channels cause employees to stop paying attention to important information related to health and safety. A possible solution is to segment the content and use plain language principles to make the information easy to digest.

When creating communication, manage its frequency reasonably.

2. Diversified and tailored content

The variety of forms of communication, such as educational videos, infographics or mobile applications, increases the chances of getting employees interested in the subject of occupational health and safety.

Communications should always be tailored to the target audience.

OHS as a key element of the company's organisational structure

OHS activities cannot be carried out in isolation, but need to be smoothly integrated with the organisational culture. OHS experts should be involved in creating long-term strategies ensuring that safety and health culture are integrated into the company's goals.

One of the priorities is to raise the profile of OHS within the organisational structure, which requires a greater buy-in from the management board. This idea can be facilitated by regular reporting on OHS performance, linking safety objectives to company results and increasing the budget allocated to prevention.

Best OHS practice according to experts

Employee education in a modern OHS system: from simple activities to advanced initiatives

Presented below are educational activities divided according to the level of difficulty and financial expenditure – from the simplest and cost-free ones to those which require higher outlays.

Cost-free and easy-to-implement activities

1. Attractive training for new employees, which covers basic health and safety principles presented in the form of practical solutions and an available range of health initiatives within the organisation.
2. Health and Safety Minutes – short, several-minute meetings dedicated to a selected safety subject. Health and Safety Minutes can be organised regularly, say once a week as part of team meetings. Topics discussed may include work ergonomics, first aid principles or healthy lifestyle.
3. Single-topic webinars – delivered by third party experts and in-house specialists. These may focus on:
 - Ergonomics in remote work.
 - Available health initiatives.
 - Accident prevention.
4. Educational materials (e.g. from the Central Institute for Labour Protection) - sharing educational materials – brochures, articles, posters or videos. They can be posted on the intranet, emailed or displayed on monitors in offices.
5. Articles and newsletters - regular articles on occupational health and safety in company newsletters or on the intranet. Topics may include ergonomics, stress management techniques or ways to build healthy habits.
6. Promotion of sports and healthy competition - organising sports challenges, such as walking challenges, can motivate employees to be more physically active ([see here for an example of an initiative](#)).
7. Changing wallpapers and screensavers on the service equipment of employees - using wallpapers and screensavers with simple health and safety tips, e.g. reminders about breaks or ergonomics.

8. Active breaks - organising short, active breaks at work that help relax muscles and reduce tension.
9. Encouraging physical activity - promoting physical activity through campaigns, such as competitions for the highest number of steps during the day.
10. Consultations with employees - gathering regular feedback from employees about their health and safety needs and concerns.

Activities of medium difficulty and cost

1. Specialized trainings.
 - Training for new hires (e-learning).
 - First aid and AED training.
 - Training on ergonomics and safe work practices.
 - Safe driving training.
2. Educational videos.
 - Videos displayed on monitors in common areas. They may present ergonomic practices, fire safety procedures or first aid procedures.
 - Webinars with external experts on mental and physical health.
3. Healthy company.
 - Group classes, yoga, pilates or exercises for a healthy back are a way to bond employees and improve their health and wellbeing.
4. OHS competitions.
 - Organising quizzes, crosswords, and health and safety knowledge tests.
 - Organising competitions for the best photo of an ergonomic remote workspace.
 - Identifying ambassadors/ role models among employees, e.g. "Heroes of the health/ OHS culture".

Activities requiring higher outlays

1. Medical packages.
 - Providing employees with access to private medical care as part of employee benefits.
 - Medical packages including diagnostic tests and specialist consultations.
2. Sports cards.
 - Support for employees' physical activity through sports cards that provide access to gyms, swimming pools and fitness classes.

- 3. Medical examinations for employees.**
 - Organising preventive checkups, including vaccinations, eye examinations and cancer tests.
 - Flu vaccinations in the workplace.
- 4. Extra day off for examinations.**
 - Giving employees an extra day off on their birthdays, which they can use for preventive checkups.
 - "Health Day" available to every employee once a year.
- 5. Individual ergonomic consultations (external experts).**
 - Hiring specialists to conduct individual consultations on ergonomics to adapt workstations to employee needs.
- 6. Physiotherapy/ massages in the office.**
 - Setting up a physiotherapy/ massage room in the workplace, where employees can benefit from consultations or massages.
- 7. Practical training with external experts.**
 - Fire safety – practical exercises using fire extinguishers and fire simulations. This is particularly important in offices located in multi-story buildings.
 - First aid – practical exercises facilitated by paramedics.
 - Defensive driving – training to improve driving techniques.
- 8. Health and safety days.**
 - Comprehensive events combining education with practical health tests for employees and their families may include workshops, consultations with doctors, preventive checkups and stands promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- 9. Psychological support programmes.**
 - Access to free consultations for employees with psychologists or other experts
 - Support for employees during a crisis, e.g. death of a team member.
- 10. Voice training workshops.**
 - Training for employees, especially call centre staff, on the correct use of voice to avoid voice strain.
 - Workshops conducted by speech therapists and voice trainers.
- 11. OHS innovation budget.**
 - Allocating a budget to the implementation of employee ideas on how to improve health and working conditions.
 - Competition for employees for the best idea on workplace ergonomics.

12. Ozonated water instead of chemicals.

- Introducing ozonated water for office cleaning instead of traditional chemical agents.

13. Air sensors.

- Installing air quality monitoring devices in offices.
- Sensors measuring CO₂ and air humidity levels.

14. Social impact initiatives.

- Social impact initiatives are an excellent form of OHS education, and an effective team bonding method. Below are some ideas that can be adapted to the needs and capabilities of the organisation.

Table. Social impact initiatives as an opportunity to educate people on occupational health and safety

Idea	Description	Education	Bonding
Creating green spaces	Planting trees, flowers or creating gardens in urban spaces or on office premises.	Learning how to work with gardening tools, paying attention to ergonomics and safety when bending or carrying heavy objects.	Employees can work in pairs or teams, which builds a spirit of cooperation.
First aid workshops for the local community	Arranging open workshops for the local community, facilitated by company employees or third party specialists.	Employees consolidate their first aid knowledge while educating others. For example, they can learn CPR and how to use an AED.	Preparing an event together and working for others strengthens the sense of team camaraderie.
Physical activity day	Organising an event promoting a healthy lifestyle, e.g. charity runs, bicycle rides or Nordic walking.	Participants learn the principles of warm-up, movement ergonomics and injury prevention.	Playing sports together helps build relationships and healthy competition.
Building birdhouses or bug hotels	A campaign to install nesting boxes or bee hotels in parks, on company grounds or in urban spaces.	Learning the principles of safe work at heights, using carpentry tools and hand protection.	Teamwork on creative projects strengthens bonds between employees.
Eco workshops for children	Organising workshops for children of employees or the local community, devoted to such subjects as recycling, safety at home and safety on the street.	Employees learn how to explain safety rules in an accessible way, which consolidates their own knowledge.	Teamwork on preparing materials and running workshops.

Table. Social impact initiatives as an opportunity to educate people on occupational health and safety

Idea	Description	Education	Bonding
Support from the fire brigade or rescuers	Arranging a visit to the local fire department or collaborating on organising educational events for the community.	Employees will learn how emergency services work, which will increase their awareness of safety in crisis situations.	The joint initiative will help cement the team.
Blood donation campaigns	Arranging blood donation in cooperation with donation venues.	Employees learn basic medical facts about blood donation and the principles of preparation and safety in such situations.	Joint participation in this noble cause will strengthen bonds between employees.
Educational paths in the office	Designing paths with information boards on healthy lifestyle, ergonomics and first aid principles.	Employees are involved in designing the content of and preparing the boards, which consolidates their knowledge.	Joint work on a project is an opportunity to share ideas and collaborate with each other.
Open days with rescue demonstrations	Organising open days during which employees and the local community can participate in demonstrations on evacuation, first aid or firefighting.	Employees participate in preparations and learn how to behave in crisis situations.	Organising a large event together helps build team spirit.
Healthy cooking workshops	Cooking classes during which participants learn to prepare healthy meals, based on the principles of ergonomics and safety in the kitchen.	Employees will learn the rules for safe use of kitchen equipment and proper food storage.	Cooking together is a great opportunity to talk and foster relationships.

Educating managers on OHS: effective practices and strategies

Educating managers about occupational health and safety is key to building a safety culture within an organisation. Managers are not only the leaders of their teams, but also the people responsible for enforcing and promoting OHS standards.

A well-prepared manager can effectively minimise the risk of accidents, support employees in maintaining their wellbeing and contribute to team success.

Below are educational activities divided by level of difficulty and financial outlay - from the simplest and no-cost to advanced, requiring more resources.

Easy and cost-free activities

- 1.** OHS knowledge pills.
 - Short, several-minute OHS educational materials, such as videos, presentations and infographics.
 - Newsletter for managers – a summary of key information in an accessible form.
- 2.** Periodic management meetings with invited OHS representatives .
 - Periodic meetings aimed at updating knowledge and promoting OHS activities within the organisation.
 - Regular reporting on incidents, accidents and health and safety activities.
- 3.** Promoting effective and healthy calendar management.
 - Organising short, 15-minute educational breaks, e.g. using videos on ergonomics or relaxation/ breathing exercises.
 - Time for deep work during the day and short breaks from the computer.

Activities of medium difficulty and cost

- 1.** Awareness raising workshops.
 - Online or face-to-face workshops for managers covering the topics of responsibility for OHS in the team.
 - Sessions conducted by OHS experts, including analysis of accidents and errors.

2. Psychology education.

- Regular meetings with a psychologist aimed at building basic knowledge of psychology with regard to recurring topics such as procrastination, stress, depression and burnout.
- Workshops for managers to help them recognise the signs of burnout in employees and implement supportive actions.
- 1:1 sessions with an occupational psychologist, during which managers can discuss the problems of their teams.

Advanced activities and high-cost initiatives

1. OHS Leader Academy.

- A comprehensive training programme developing managers' safety management skills.
- Preparing leaders to promote an OHS culture within the organisation.

OHS communication: effective strategies and tools

Transparent and simple communication is the basis for successful solutions.

Below are communication activities divided by financial outlay - from no-cost to those requiring more resources.

Cost-free activities

1. Mailing

- Sending regular emails containing information on health and safety rules, healthy lifestyle tips or reminders of upcoming events.
- "OHS Tip" messages with short advice, for example how to ergonomically adjust a chair or how to avoid eyestrain.

2. OHS alerts

- Short, instant messages about existing threats or reminders about safety rules.

3. Posters for employees

- Placing posters with key OHS rules in visible places, such as kitchens, elevators or toilets.

4. Intranet posts

- Posting information, articles, communications and tips on the corporate intranet.

5. Monthly newsletters

- Sending monthly newsletters with articles, tips, quizzes and information about OHS events.
- Thematic newsletters – in January, devoted to ergonomics, while in February – to mental health.

6. Facebook or Teams groups

Creating groups where employees can share experiences, ask questions and get support.

Cost-generating activities

1. Visual communication tailored to the user
 - The use of carefully selected graphics, icons and colours in educational materials.
 - Graphical guides to first aid principles instead of text-only instructions.
2. Educational app with a competition
 - Implementing an application that supports employee education, enables participation in challenges and encourages competition between teams.
 - An app with OHS quizzes where employees earn points for correct answers.
3. In-house videos
 - Production of internal educational videos with the participation of employees or experts.


Summary

We conclude this part of the report by encouraging you to look at the examples of specific actions taken by companies, presented later on in this paper. Let them serve as food for thought and inspiration for further exchange of ideas between experts, which should help harmonise OHS practices and take them to a higher level.

The background features a large red semi-circle on the right side. To its left, there are several horizontal light blue lines of varying lengths. Below the red semi-circle, there is a light blue square. In the top right corner, there are several concentric red lines that curve downwards and to the left. In the bottom left corner, there are several concentric red lines that curve upwards and to the right. The text 'Experts' articles' is centered within the red semi-circle, with a thin white horizontal line below it.

Experts' articles

Chapter 2



10 key health challenges based on the results of the National Health Test of Poles, 2023



Diana Żochowska,
Head of Medonet,
Ringier Axel Springer Polska

About the survey

The National Health Test of Poles is the largest health study conducted annually by Medonet since 2020. A total of 1.2 million Poles took part in the first four editions. The aim of the project is to motivate Polish women and men to actively engage in health prevention, including through regular check-ups and a healthy lifestyle.

After completing the survey, each participant receives a score in the form of their Health Index, which shows how well they follow preventive health care recommendations on a scale of 0 to 100. In addition, each person receives a list of recommendations prepared by experts from the Scientific Council of the National Health Test whereby they can improve their Health Index in the future.

Four out of ten study participants have confirmed that, thanks to the recommendations received, they took measures to improve their health, e.g. made a medical appointment, underwent tests, started eating healthier or devoted more time to physical activity.

The full report of the survey can be downloaded for free from this site: <https://narodowytestzdrowia.medonet.pl/raport>

Health Index

The average Health Index in Poland in 2023 was 63.6%. The Health Index of working Poles was 63.4% – in each year this result is very close to the average for the adult Polish population. Another trend that becomes clearly evident over the individual years of the survey is that the average Health Index of people employed under civil law contracts is significantly lower (59.6% in 2023) than that of people employed under an employment contract or self-employed (63.8% in 2023).

Challenge #1 – engaging the young to take care of their health

The Health Index increases with age, which means that young adults take the least care of their health. It is worth providing this group of employees with regular education on the importance of preventive care at a young age.

Challenge #2 – increasing the percentage of people performing preventive examinations

- 14% of adult Poles have never checked their cholesterol level.
- 10% of women have never received a Pap test.
- 7% have never checked their blood sugar levels.

The most common reason for not performing tests is that people feel no need to perform them.

This is definitely an area that requires social education.

Challenge #3 – solutions to reduce the incidence of the most common health issues

The most common health issues, i.e. those that occur several times a month, are: back pain (35%), mental, emotional or physical exhaustion from work (33%) and daytime sleepiness (28%).

Challenge #4 – taking care of the mental health of young people

As many as 32% of people aged 18-24 and 19% of people aged 25-34 assess their health as bad or very bad. More and more young people are entering adulthood with mental health problems, which poses a major challenge for society and employers.

Challenge #5 – education on effective ways to cope with stress

Stress is an integral part of our lives. The key thing is whether we can cope with stress that has a negative impact on us. Meanwhile, 20% of Poles admit that in stressful situations they do nothing and stress some more, and another 13% resort to stress eating. This means that a third of people do not know or do not use effective methods of coping with stress.

Challenge #6 – reducing the percentage of people who use addictive substances

85% of Poles consume alcohol. However, Gen Z is clearly shifting its focus away from this substance. 21% of Poles are addicted, and another 7% smoke occasionally. 54% of female smokers and 58% of male smokers say they would like to quit smoking but are unable to. This leaves considerable room for employers to support their employees in this regard.

Challenge #7 – reducing the percentage of people who use alternatives to cigarettes

The percentage of people who have tried products that are alternative to cigarettes is growing year over year. The growth is the fastest among the youngest age groups. Among people aged 18-24, more than half have tried tobacco heat sticks, and 79% have used e-cigarettes.

Challenge #8 – slimming down the society

60% of Poles are overweight or obese, with obesity affecting half of this group. The problem is more prevalent among men (26%) than women (21%).

Challenge #9 – increasing the number of physically active people

46% of working Poles admit that they do not practice any sport. This problem affects women more often than men.


Challenge #10 – diet higher in fruit and vegetables

Only every third person eats fruit and vegetables every day. In turn, as many as 61% admit that they use multivitamin supplements. The percentage of women and men taking supplements is growing year over year.

The need for education and social mobilisation for health prevention

All the cited data point to a great need for consistent social education and tools that will help Poles take better care of their health. In this regard, employers can bring a lot of value to their employees by providing space for education, including in the form of webinars with experts, but also by organising health campaigns and other initiatives that will encourage employees to look after their own health.

All data cited in the article come from the National Health Test of Poles 2023, Medonet.



Occupational Health and Safety may be interesting!



Izabela Laskowska,
Head of the Occupational Health and Safety
Department at Rossmann SDP

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is still perceived as a necessity rather than an inspiring work element. For many employees, it evokes the stereotype of boring training and formal procedures. However, the experience of creative OHS specialists shows that this topic can be approached completely differently to make it engaging, vigorous and, above all, effective.

Occupational Health and Safety training – a boring duty?

The much-needed change of perception applies to both induction and refresher training.

For many employees, induction training is the first time they are exposed to the company's safety culture, so it is a key moment in building positive associations. The traditional, monotonous transfer of information should be replaced with engaging methods that arouse interest and encourage reflection on safe behaviours.

We tend to forget that safety is not only about following rules in the workplace – it is also about the way of thinking and acting that can be transferred to everyday situations. Refresher training is an excellent opportunity not only to remind employees of occupational health and safety rules, but also to teach them practical, safe behaviours that apply both at work and in their private lives. For example, knowledge of first aid can help in everyday life. By knowing such things as ergonomics of using a computer, the principles of safe movement on the road and awareness of home safety hazards (e.g. related to electricity and household chemicals), employees will be able to take better care of themselves and their loved ones.

It is vital to inspire employees to think about safety holistically. Discussions about safe practices, such as responsible phone use while driving, can have a real impact on lives and in this way encourage employees to reflect on how their decisions affect their own safety and the safety of others. This approach will not only increase the effectiveness of training, but will also boost team engagement and awareness that safety is a universal value that is worth continuous improvement.

Here are some simple ideas how to diversify training sessions at our organisation:

- Safety Talks – interactive group discussions on safety in professional and private life;
- Presentation – simple, clear slides with minimal text. Present key information using images, charts and infographics.
- Video materials – videos showing specific hazards and good practices in the workplace. Make sure they are dynamic; images are easier to remember than words alone. We prepare video tutorials on our own.
- Interactive exercises – quizzes, simulations and mini-tasks that engage participants and encourage active participation.

Building a safety culture

Building a safety culture is a long-term process that requires regular promotional activities. We began our activities many years ago by organising the Health and Safety Week. For many years now, we have undertaken various initiatives to get employees interested in our activities. It is difficult to list all of those initiatives, but with hindsight we know which activities engage employees and which do not.

Gamification is one of the most powerful employee engagement tools. The introduction of game elements, such as gaining points, prizes or team competition, effectively attracts the attention of participants.

In our organisation, we started gamification by organising a knowledge competition about occupational health and safety, which in the first version was an email competition, but over time, following evaluation, it was put on a system platform, providing several interesting options to support the answers.

The OHS Escape Room is another initiative that our employees really enjoyed. Scenarios related to safety, hazard identification, first aid and decision-making in emergency situations combine entertainment with practical learning. Using the escape room, we also created an OHS Road in an office building. There were many different tasks to complete during the game. This way several teams could participate at the same time.

Based on several years of experience, we have observed that employees will be interested in safety if the subject is presented in an interesting and engaging form. OHS knowledge competitions can be conducted in many interesting ways using existing tools. You just need to adapt them to the needs of the organisation and create an interesting scenario.

Valuable activities don't need to cost much

I often hear that such activities must be expensive, which is not true. Organising engaging health and safety activities does not have to cost much. Using internal resources, such as recording your own educational materials, helps achieve great results with a minimal budget. You can arrange a lot of activities on your own, tailoring them to your needs and using available resources. Commitment and creativity of the OHS team is key to success.

After we had organised our Health and Safety Week 13 times, in 2024 we decided to upgrade our approach to better meet the needs of employees by promoting health and safety throughout the year.

In this way, we have come up with Health and Safety Days. Each month is devoted to a different topic. By working in monthly thematic cycles, we regularly promote various aspects of safety, such as mental health, ergonomics or first aid. We record short, inspiring videos about health and safety, which we call "OHS minutes". Employees can access the recordings through the available communication channels.

"Healthy Business"

By taking care of health and safety, we take care of physical fitness. This is the idea of our "Healthy Business" initiative, which includes: office massages, meetings with a personal trainer, healthy back workouts, or yoga in the workplace.

In addition, in our internal magazine for employees we regularly publish articles on health and safety and design educational posters reminding people of key principles and good practices.

Initiatives such as Health and Safety Days strengthen bonds between employees and leaders and foster a positive work environment. What drives us is the feeling that what we do is meaningful and makes a difference.

Certainly, this report would not have been made without the involvement of the entire OHS department. For this reason, I'd love to thank my team for their constant commitment, creativity and passion they put into building a safe work environment day in, day out.

Working from home and accidents



r.pr. Karolina Kanclerz,
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Schiffter Stępień Kanclerz | Littler

Companies have used remote work for years, more or less formally. However, it has gained significant traction since 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and risk mitigation caused working from home to become commonplace. Even though we have managed to deal with the pandemic, working from home has become a fixture of the modern employment model. However, the new model comes with new problems, including in the area of accidents at work.

Most accidents occur at home. Understandably, this still holds true when home serves as an office. Statistics show that in 2023, every other day, on average, someone would have an accident while working remotely. We are still waiting for the 2024 data. The definition of an accident at work – a sudden incident brought about by an external cause, resulting in injury or death, which occurs in connection with work – makes no reference to the place of work. This means that the definition may also apply to accidents suffered while working from home. However, certain situations may be very complex, making it difficult to clearly determine whether an accident should actually be considered an accident at work.

Burns, trips and other misfortunes

When qualifying an accident, the biggest challenge is to determine its connection with work. When an accident occurs in the workplace, employers can be fairly sure how to qualify it. However, in practice, remote work is governed by slightly different rules than on-site work. Employees prepare meals in their own kitchen, sometimes also for other family members; they have lunch together, during short breaks they go for a walk with the dog, do some shopping, etc. There are many points of overlap between the personal sphere and the professional sphere. What if an accident occurs at one of those points? How do you classify such incidents as a burn, cut, trip on the stairs or a sprained ankle? Each situation will be different, but several conclusions can already be drawn from the current practice.

No connection with work means no accident at work

The connection with work is one of the key circumstances that will determine the nature of the event. If the connection is broken, the event will not qualify as an accident at work. For this reason, it needs to be determined precisely whether the employee's behaviour that led to the accident was aimed solely at satisfying their personal needs or whether the connection with work was maintained.

How to assess a situation in which during their working hours the employee was engaged in an activity unrelated to work, e.g. takes a break they are entitled to, goes out for a walk with their dog and suffers an accident? When considering this issue, you can refer to the judgment of the Supreme Court of 20 June 2011, file ref. I UK 335/10, which says: "The connection between an incident and work is broken when at the time and place designated for work, the employee performs activities that are not directly or indirectly related to the performance of their work duties and does so for private purposes, or in any case other than those related to the employment relationship (...). If an employee sustains an injury while performing activities that are unrelated to their duties (even on the company's premises) and are not in the employer's interest, the incident cannot qualify as an accident at work."

The court explained that the case law links the causes of the injury to the performance of work-related activities that the employee was contractually required to perform or that were instructed by their superiors. A reference is made to "ordinary activities" within the meaning of Article 3(1)(1) of the Accident Act, understood to include both activities that are part of the work process itself, those related to the preparation and completion of work, and those that are not directly related to the performance of work, but which are legally and vitally justified by the essence of the employment relationship.

The connection between an incident and work is broken when the employee performs activities that are not directly or indirectly related to the performance of their employment duties and does so for private purposes, or in any case other than those related to the employment relationship. Accordingly, the relationship will be broken when the employee engages in other activities the purpose of which is unrelated to employment and the employer's interests, e.g. takes their dog for a walk, plays with their kids or cleans the house.

Careful with your breakfast break

Some very interesting judgements are handed down with regard to accidents suffered by employees while eating. In the judgment of 22 August 1979, file ref. III PR 58/79, the Supreme Court found that an accident during a breakfast break and during activities related to that break is an accident at work, even if the event that caused the injury resulted from the employee's negligent or careless behaviour. It can be argued that having a meal, especially during the prescribed meal break, is a "vitally justified" activity that generally does retain its connection with work.

Sometimes details can be of key importance. In one case, an employee suffered a burn, but due to the content of the employee's testimony the accident was not considered an accident at work. Specifically, the employee testified that the accident was witnessed by his family members who were sitting at the table and waiting for breakfast that he was preparing. Based on those words, the authorities concluded that the connection between the accident and work had been broken. This is because the employee was preparing a meal for his family.

Internal external cause

Another difficult part of qualifying an accident at remote work will be the existence of an external cause of the accident, which is one of the elements of the definition of an accident at work. For example, difficulties will arise in situations when an employee suddenly gets up from their desk to grab headphones or a charger and gets a leg cramp that causes them to fall or break their arm, or missteps and trips on the stairs. Should such situations be treated as occupational accidents? Yes, according to the Supreme Court, which in its decision of 23 March 2021, file ref. III USK 89/21, found that:

"Any external factor (i.e. one that is not due to the internal characteristics of a person) capable of causing harmful effects under existing conditions can be considered an external causal factor. In this sense, external causes will not only include work tools, machines or forces of nature, but also the work and activities of the injured person themselves (e.g. stumbling, an unfortunate reflex). In other words, an external cause, such as a jammed leg, a cramp or a trip, leads to a sudden event such as a fall, which is a random event, i.e. unexpected, unplanned and unintentional. Accordingly, such incidents may meet the requirements of an occupational accident.

Details matter

Remote work is a relatively new concept in the Polish labour law. Over the next several years, we will certainly see further developments in court practice in this area.

However, remember that all accidents that occur during remote work should be considered on a case by case basis, in addition to having regard to specific regulations and general principles.

At the end of the day, when a pension authority or court makes a decision, it is the individual merits of the case that will be crucial in assessing whether the accident was work-related.



Different minds, one office: a neuroinclusive workspace design



Barbara Majerska,
architect and researcher at Workplace.

The world around us is changing fast. We have an increasingly better understanding of how the space in which we live and work affects us. Science and research give us evidence that our surrounding environment has an impact on our wellbeing, but they also give us tools to manage this impact in an informed and positive way.

Neuroinclusive offices can benefit both employees and organisations, for example, through:

- Greater innovation – diversity of perspectives can support creative solutions.
- Improved engagement – employees feel more comfortable, which can support both engagement and productivity.
- Better company image – spaces tailored to the needs of different users attract talent and strengthen the sense of belonging.

What is neurodiversity and neuroatypicality?

Neurodiversity is a concept that there are natural variations in the human brain, encompassing the full spectrum of how the human nervous system functions and develops.

Neuroatypicality is a term that describes people without a typical set of neurological characteristics. Neuroatypical people represent as much as 15–20% of our population.

As awareness of neurodiversity grows, we are gaining a better understanding of how to design spaces for neuroatypical individuals. In the report “The Neurodiverse in the Office. How to Design Neuroinclusive Workspaces?” (Neuroróżnorodni w biurze. Jak projektować neuroinkluzywne przestrzenie pracy?), developed by Workplace and SKANSKA, we tried to present key tips on how to create neuroinclusive spaces. This is a relatively new field that can help architects and office space decision makers verify the effectiveness of solutions.

Health impact of a poorly designed workspace

According to data presented in the report, a poorly designed workspace can lead to chronic stress, reduced productivity and a higher employee turnover.

People with sensory hypersensitivity may be overwhelmed by noise, intense lighting or odours, or may experience a lack of stimulation.

Drawing on the report, I recommend the following:

- Barrier: use acoustic panels and greenery to separate workstations from entrances and other spaces.
- Design separate quiet and loud zones.
- Separate spaces that generate strong odours (including the kitchen).
- Provide active seatings: balls, stools, steppers, height adjustable desks, etc.

Feeling in control of space and being able to navigate it easily is key to managing emotions and working efficiently.

The solutions include:

- Providing adjustable lighting, including dimmable desk lamps.
- Permanent assignment of workstations or long-term reservation system.
- Personal storage areas near workstations.
- Clear functional division of space, unambiguous and legible signage.

Regeneration zones are essential for neuroatypical and neurotypical workers.

The proposed solutions include:

- Sensory zones with mood lighting, scented cushions and acoustic panels.
- Biophilic design (adding natural elements, such as plants to the interior).
- Active recreation areas with dynamic equipment such as swings or sensory paths.

There are many other solutions than those presented above; to learn more, please visit www.neuroinclusive.design, where you can download the report for free. I encourage you to try the solutions and see how they can work for users. Science gives us hints, while users validate them through their experiences, providing valuable feedback and enabling continuous improvement of solutions.

Summing up, neuroinclusive design is the future and another milestone in the process of creating inclusive spaces, namely those that will benefit all users. Once implemented, the principles described can both improve the quality of life of employees and contribute to the business success of the organisation.



The new generation is transforming the job market from the ground up. Things will be different with Gen Z.



Grzegorz Święch,
founder of the OFFschool foundation

The modern job market is facing the challenge of adapting to the needs of Generation Z employees, i.e. people born after 1995. According to the report titled "Gen Boost. Young people in the job market" ["Gen Boost. Młodzi na rynku pracy"], this group brings in a new quality that requires employers to move away from traditional patterns. Gen Z is a generation that integrates professional and private life into a coherent whole, while redefining the concept of wellbeing, communication and development in the work environment. To tap into their potential, it is vital to understand their needs and adapt the workplace paradigms – and these seem to have changed a lot.

Diversity as a value

Communication preferences are among the key differences between Generation Z and older generations. The report's data shows that young people prefer text-based communication, such as emails, SMSs or messages sent via corporate instant messaging apps (37%). Older generations, especially managers, prefer face-to-face conversations (44%).

Gen Z favours concise and impactful communication that does not distract them from current tasks, while older generations consider direct contact to be the basis for building relationships and trust. Both sides are right – the young offer speed and clarity, the older – deeper relationships. A compromise needs to be found to adapt communication to the situation and needs. Gen Zers show their wisdom here – they do not reject the values of traditional relationships, but want them to be practical and fit for purpose. They see no need to meet or spend time in the office just for the sake of being there.

Prioritised by the young, neglected by earlier generations

For Gen Z, physical and mental wellbeing has become central to defining the workplace. Unlike older generations, who often ignored this aspect in favour of efficiency, young people see it as the foundation of long-term effectiveness and satisfaction.

Flexible working hours are among the most important benefits for young people (69%), as it allows them to achieve not only professional but also private goals. Medical care (57%) and psychological support (42%) are also important. Gen Zers do not treat wellbeing as a luxury, but as an essential feature that allows them to function at the highest level.

Employers should understand that caring about the health and safety of young people does not mean indulging in their whims, but making an investment that will boost their productivity and engagement. Gen Z shows that sustainable human development – both on professional and personal ground – can benefit the entire organisation.

Seeing their older colleagues, they do not want to follow in their footsteps and wake up at the age of 40 or 50 to start a “real” life. They want to live their lives right from the start – this is extremely wise and important in this generation.

It's not what it seems...

In contrast to the stereotypical perception of work-life balance, Gen Z blends these spheres into a harmonious whole. For them, work becomes a source of value and purpose rather than just a source of income. It is an important part of their lives and for this reason it should align with their values and with who they really are.

In this way, young employees bring genuine motivation and commitment to the organisation. They put a premium on work culture based on diversity, equality and inclusion. As many as 65% of young respondents point to the lack of equal treatment as one of the biggest deficiencies of older generations. Gen Zers strive to create workplaces that respect each employee as an individual, regardless of age, gender or background.

Lifelong education

Professional development is a priority for young employees. A significant 39% of respondents say that learning and developing new skills is the most important part of work. This is more than the earnings, which ranked lower.

Gen Zers do not treat development as an extra feature, but as an integral part of their career. Training is an attractive benefit for them (44%), but at the same time they expect it to be tailored to their level of knowledge and needs. Organisations that fail to understand this need risk losing young talent to companies that offer more dynamic and engaging development paths.

Members of Gen Z do not want to be married to their profession for a lifetime. They want to gain new qualifications, new skills, and switch careers – their professional life must have a momentum. If they can't find it in their current workplace, they will look for a new one.

Courage and pragmatism

Gen Z brings a unique value to the job market – the courage to question the status quo and pragmatism in approaching change. They inject fresh energy and digital savvy to the organisation, giving it the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world. In this way, they can turn challenges into opportunities and build a modern work culture.

Their commitment to social issues such as diversity, inclusion and environmental protection shows that they think not only about themselves, but also about the future of the global community. Gen Zers are not afraid to ask questions that are often uncomfortable but necessary to drive change. They tend to question hierarchy. You can build authority with them through actions and behaviours rather than through academic titles or rank in the organisational structure.

So it's time for a paradigm shift

Generation Z is not just a new group of workers – it is a driving force that changes the world. Pragmatic, wise and innovative, they are key to creating better, more sustainable workplaces. Employers who open up to their needs and values will gain not only loyal and committed employees, but also partners in building the future.

Gen Zers show that work can be more than just an obligation – it can become a space where the development of an individual means the development of the entire organisation. It is time to listen to the voice of the young generation and allow them to co-create a new era in the job market. Gen Z's wisdom may be of great value to members of older generations – who can start working smarter and not just hard. Isn't that exactly what we all need?



Case studies

Chapter 3



Modern occupational health and safety solutions – theory vs practice

Małgorzata Furtak,
Head of the OHS & Wellbeing Office, Santander Bank Polska

Occupational health and safety (OHS) in the office environment represents an integrated approach to the safety, health and wellbeing of employees, going beyond traditional technical aspects such as ergonomics or accident prevention.

Modern approaches take into account not only physical, but also psychological, social and technological aspects of work, supporting both professional performance and wellbeing of employees. Santander Bank Polska also uses this model in its operations.

The bank's key strategic goal is to create a work environment that minimises the risk of injuries and health issues and supports the development and wellbeing of employees. The implementation of this approach requires formal solutions, the engagement of management and employees alike, as well as continuous monitoring and adaptation to changing working conditions. As an employer, the bank is fully aware that the modern office environment is a place of dynamic changes that influence the way in which occupational health and safety issues are perceived. The traditional approach to occupational health and safety, focused mainly on ergonomics and compliance with procedures, is becoming insufficient in the face of new challenges such as hybrid work, digitalisation of processes or the growing importance of mental health in the workplace (Clarke, 2006).

Modern occupational health and safety in the office environment integrates various disciplines, such as ergonomics, psychology, technology and corporate culture, to more effectively respond to employee needs.

Table 1. Key elements of modern health and safety in offices:

Ergonomics and technology	Promoting physical and mental health	Managing risk in office work	Safety and trust culture	Adaptation to modern work models	Corporate social responsibility
Optimisation of workstations, e.g. organisation of space in accordance with the principles of ergonomics (e.g. appropriate monitor height, reduction of musculoskeletal strain).	Physical health e.g. encouraging physical activity by organising exercise-related events..	Physical hazards, e.g. reducing eye strain through appropriate monitor and lighting settings. Hygiene and epidemiological safety, e.g. procedures for responding to crisis situations such as a pandemic.	Building employee awareness, e.g. training and information campaigns on ergonomics, mental health and ill-health prevention or promoting open dialogue about the risks and needs of employees related to occupational health and safety.	Hybrid and remote work, e.g. education on tools and resources for working from home, such as appropriate chairs, monitors or access to health-supporting platforms, but also the development of guidelines for the healthy organisation of remote work, including minimising social isolation or avoiding burnout.	A holistic approach to wellbeing, e.g. acknowledging that the wellbeing of an office worker is dependent not only on the physical work environment, but also on team relationships, support from superiors and work-life balance. Acknowledging the needs of diverse groups, such as people with disabilities, elderly workers and parents.
The use of health-supporting technologies such as applications reminding people to take a break and exercise.	Mental health, including psychological support programmes or workshops on coping with stress and managing emotions.	Digital threats, including education on computer hygiene (e.g. to minimise digital fatigue).	Trust and cooperation, e.g. contributing to the development of an OHS policy that takes into account the voice of employees and trade unions or consultations on working conditions and their impact on health.	Designing offices based on the "Activity-Based Working" principles (e.g. different work zones for creative, individual, or group tasks). Acknowledging needs related to neurodiversity .	Sharing good practices with other health and safety experts, e.g. organising or actively participating in industry conferences

Presented below are practical examples of how modern occupational health and safety is developed at Santander Bank Polska.



Building a health culture in the organisation, or how Santander Bank Polska takes care of the physical and mental health of its employees, changes their habits and improves interpersonal relations

Matylda Kawczyńska,
wellbeing expert, Santander Bank Polska S.A.

The culture of any organisation is created by people. No organisation will reach its objectives without their engagement and daily effort. That's why it's so important to create a conducive work environment in which employees can develop, achieve their career goals and, above all, feel good in the workplace.

Strategic development of a culture of health awareness and care

Santander Bank Polska as an employer does not avoid this topic and wants to actively contribute to reducing the future impact of the growing number of any health problems.

The bank's activities can be divided into three categories:

1. promotion,
2. prevention,
3. crisis management.

Integrated model of health awareness and care

Promotion of health behaviours	Prevention	Crisis management
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The promotion area includes:

- Education in the field of self-care with a particular emphasis on mindfulness (towards oneself and others) and workplace ergonomics.
- Four thematic pillars: physical health, mental health, successful relationships, financial education.
- Providing education on how to recognise psychosomatic symptoms of mental crises.
- Overcoming the stigma attached to mental disorders.
- Psychoeducation among managers and promotion of inclusive behaviours.

The prevention area includes:

- Building mental resilience/ psychological flexibility (psychoeducation and dedicated thematic training).
- Ways of dealing with mental crises (family, health, professional) in the professional context.
- Psychosocial aspects of work organisation, including an open attitude, positive motivation, support from superiors and mutual support among team members.
- Introducing good practices for remote work, organisation of meetings, etc.
- Building communities, nominating ambassadors of the culture of health.

The crisis management area includes:

- Guides for employees and managers.
- Cooperation with specialists – using knowledge and practical support in crisis situations.
- Medical and psychotherapeutic support as part of the healthcare service available to employees and individual expert support for employees in crisis situations.

With various health and cultural activities, employees are motivated to spend time together with their colleagues, both at work and beyond. This, in turn, contributes to making Santander Bank Polska a better workplace.

As an employer, the bank is aware that employees' wellbeing, both physical and mental, as well as their sense of belonging to the community they are part of has a real impact on their engagement. The organisation ensures regular communication about available pro-health solutions and opportunities, which is intended to reach the widest possible audience. Interest Clubs are the flagship example of such activity.

Interest Clubs – the inner power of health culture

Interest Clubs have been operating since 2022 as part of “successful relationships” – one of the pillars of the wellbeing strategy. The initiative currently encompasses 21 clubs, with over 3,200 members and 56 coordinators. Employees can initiate the creation of a club on a chosen topic or join an existing one: from football and basketball to roller skating and cooking, reading, handicrafts to artificial intelligence and investing.

Interest Clubs have become an integral part of the banking community. Their coordinators are natural ambassadors of health-related initiatives prepared by the bank and, together with the OHS & Wellbeing Office, they build a culture of health in the organisation.

The clubs are bottom-up, voluntary and low-cost initiatives. They operate when it's convenient for their members and are always focused on promoting physical and mental health.

They are a driving force for the effective implementation of solutions in the organisation. The OHS & Wellbeing Office creates solutions, but it is the club coordinators who ensure the effective distribution of information and promotion of initiatives.

Safety and trust culture

Building a culture of safety in the office environment requires engagement from employees and leaders in the organisation. Promoting open communication about health and safety risks and needs is of paramount importance. Regular training and educational campaigns that raise employee awareness of ergonomics, mental health and health prevention are the foundations of effective implementation of safety rules (Reason, 1997).

As a study conducted in Polish organisations shows, employees are more committed to ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety rules if they feel that their needs are taken into account in the decision-making process (Nowak & Kowalska, 2021). The role of the Occupational Health and Safety Office at the bank is to monitor trends, examine needs and create solutions, while employees themselves create and maintain activities that support health prevention.



Ergonomics of the workstation in the remote and hybrid work model

Beata Jędrecka,
Chief Specialist for Occupational Health and Safety, Santander Bank Polska S.A.

Occupational health and safety in the office environment is becoming increasingly important in the face of rapid changes caused by digitalisation.

According to data from Statistics Poland (GUS), in the second quarter of 2024 as many as 10.2% of all employees worked remotely. An additional 15.7% of employees worked from home "usually or sometimes". Such popularity of remote working requires a broader look at ergonomics and employee health, because in addition to many benefits, it also brings significant challenges.

Lack of appropriate ergonomic standards

Remote working creates specific health hazards that result from improper adaptation of the workstation. Medonet research (medonet.pl 2024) shows that back pain is the most common health complaint made by Poles. This issue concerns as many as 39% of respondents. Poor work ergonomics is one of the main underlying reasons for this situation. The number of people with vision problems is also growing. The sources of these conditions can be traced to various aspects of daily life, but the key source is a prolonged and regular staring at a computer, tablet or smartphone screen, often with inadequate lighting.

Legal requirements

Is it enough to provide employees with guidelines on how to arrange their remote workstation? Is it enough to collect statements from employees that they have ensured safe and hygienic working conditions at their remote workstations? The legal perspective does not seem to be sufficient.

New challenges for the OHS function

To prevent the negative effects of remote working, OHS experts should engage in identifying risks resulting from the latest work methods and implement effective solutions. The primary goal should be to increase the comfort and efficiency of work in the changing world.

Employers, together with the OHS function, should develop a positive work safety culture that all employees will adhere to. The key is to build awareness of safety and wellbeing among employees working from home. Education is key in this process.

Relying on the experience of Santander Bank Polska, focus should be placed on educating people about healthy habits in the workplace and making sure that they know and follow those habits.

In educational materials, guides, and videos, focus should be placed on diversity, short messages, plain language, and engaging and expressive content. This way you can better reach your employees.

It is equally important to motivate employees by getting them engaged and making them responsible for their own health and safety. One of the initiatives in this area was the two-month interactive educational cycle carried out in 2014 and called "Ergonomics. Real change in 7 steps."

The programme included the following elements:

Step 1: Correct upright position

Step 2: How much does your head weigh?

Step 3: Locomotor system in motion

Step 4: Locomotor system at rest

Step 5: Locomotor system in sleep

Step 6: Shoulder and hip girdle at work

Step 7: Wrists and fingers

Articles on each step were published and promoted on the intranet every two weeks. Additional materials included e-books with guidelines in the form of texts and infographics, but also short video materials with good habits and exercises performed by an expert physiotherapist.

Adaptation to new working models

New flexible working models pose challenges for organisations in meeting health and safety requirements. When implementing a remote working model, it should be remembered that the occupational health and safety function can create various solutions, but communications must make it clear that the ultimate responsibility for applying those solutions rests with the employee.



Eye care in the office environment: Employer practices and responsibilities as applied by Santander Bank Polska.

Agnieszka Domaradzka,
Senior Specialist for Occupational Health and Safety, Santander
Bank Polska S.A.

The modern office environment characterised by a prolonged use of monitors and artificial lighting, creates challenges related to employee eye protection. Employers are increasingly focused on minimising digital eye strain and improving work comfort.

Office work requires long-term use of monitors, which puts a significant strain on the eyesight. This problem, known as digital eye strain, affects most office workers and is manifested by dry eyes, headaches, and blurred vision (Sheppard & Wolffsohn, 2018). Based on applicable laws and in line with employee wellbeing policies, employers implement various practices to support eye safety, such as adapting the ergonomics of workstations, organising breaks, providing tools supporting digital hygiene and ensuring education on eye safety.

Workplace ergonomics

An ergonomic workstation is a key element of eye safety in the office environment. Monitors should be positioned at the eye level or slightly below, 50-70 cm away from the worker to reduce strain on neck and eye muscles (Hedge, 2016). Employers are investing more and more in modern monitors with blue light reduction and flicker-free technology to reduce eye strain. In addition, the use of monitor holders and ergonomic accessories, such as laptop stands, helps employees adapt their workstations to individual needs.

Office lighting is equally important and should combine natural light with appropriate artificial lighting with a colour similar to daylight (4000-5000 K). Other practices that support visual comfort include elimination of glare from monitors and providing adjustable desk lamps.

Arranging breaks and visual exercises

One of the most effective ways to prevent digital eye strain is to take regular breaks from work with the screen. Employers promote the 20-20-20 rule, which states that every 20 minutes, an employee should look away from the screen for 20 seconds at an object situated 20 feet away (approximately 6 meters) (American Optometric Association, 2022). In addition, employers operate the policy of regular 5-minute breaks every hour, which is in line with labour law requirements in many countries, including Poland.

Some companies offer workshops on simple visual exercises, such as alternating focus on near and far objects, which help relax the eye muscles. These activities not only reduce fatigue, but also increase employees' awareness of the importance of taking care of their eyesight.

Reimbursement of glasses and eye examinations

In accordance with labour law, employers are required to reimburse the costs of corrective glasses or lenses for employees who use monitors (if the eye examination confirms that the employee needs such glasses/ lenses). Many organisations go a step further, however, by offering regular eye tests in the workplace or sponsoring eye consultations. This allows for early detection of vision problems and their effective treatment.

Education and promotion of a healthy work style

Employee education on eye safety is an integral part of occupational health and safety in the workplace. There are workshops and training courses organised on visual ergonomics, digital hygiene and the principles of healthy computer work. Employers also provide educational materials that remind people of the importance of taking regular breaks and ensuring proper workstation setup.

Another important element is promoting a healthy lifestyle, which has a positive impact on eye hygiene. Workshops on healthy eating, eye disease prevention and the importance of physical activity for visual health are becoming increasingly popular at many organisations.

Educational campaign “Stay Sharp-Sighted” at Santander Bank Polska

Taking into account the requirements and good practices described above, in June 2023 the OHS & Wellbeing Office initiated the educational campaign entitled “Stay Sharp-Sighted”.

Working with a display monitor is the most common workplace hazard in office settings. The situation is no different at banks, where all employees use computers, mobile phones and other digital displays.

The aim of the campaign was to provide education on eyesight, corrective glasses and eye hygiene. Activities planned for the campaign span two years.

Activities carried out as part of the campaign:

In 2023, the glass reimbursement procedure was amended to introduce solutions that will build an even better employee experience:

- Employees can take advantage of the refund every two years from the date of the last refund (previously, only one refund was possible during the period covered by the medical check-up).
- Employees who did not receive a recommendation to wear glasses as part of their occupational health assessment will be able to submit a request for re-examination to determine the need to wear glasses (previously this was not possible).
- The employee may still be referred to an occupational health check-up in the event of SUDDEN DETERIORATION OF VISION caused by an accident, illness or other random event. Due to the exceptional nature and seriousness of the situation, no time restrictions apply (this is part of building a positive employee experience and promoting health care).
- Possibility of refunding contact lenses for work with a screen monitor.

Then, the “Eye Safety Week” was held, which included:

- vision screening among employees, conducted in cooperation with Medcover and Vision Express,
- webinar with an optometrist,
- „YOGA FOR VISION” workshops,
- discounts on glasses, frames and contact lenses; eyesight tests for bank employees.

Campaign culminated in the purchase of ultrasonic cleaners for glasses to ensure comfort while working with glasses, bank's units have been equipped with ultrasonic eyeglass cleaners a charity collection of unused glasses was organised among employees; the glasses were donated to beneficiaries of the Weź Pomóż Foundation.

Office, hybrid and remote working represent new challenges for employers in terms of ensuring vision protection for employees. Companies provide ergonomic office equipment such as monitors, desk lamps and chairs and educate employees on how to set up an ergonomic workspace in home offices. Employers also implement educational programmes to help employees organise their workstations at home in accordance with the principles of ergonomics and eye care. Santander Bank Polska also follows this practice.

Taking care of the eyesight of office workers has become one of the priorities for modern organisations. Ergonomic adaptation of workstations, organising breaks, providing education on eye safety and ensuring appropriate technological tools are among the measures that lie at the core of the modern approach to occupational health and safety in office settings. Supporting eye care not only reduces the risk of health problems, but also improves work comfort and employee productivity. This is why it is important to educate and encourage all employees to study and apply good eye care practices.



Is it worth investing in employees' physical health? How the implementation of health-oriented measures can help improve the physical wellbeing of our people.

Mateusz Starke,

Senior Occupational Health and Safety Specialist, Santander Bank Polska S.A

Lack of physical activity and the growing problem of overweight and obesity are increasingly affecting the fitness and productivity of employees. The question is whether caring for the physical health of employees should be treated as an extra cost or rather as an investment in the future of the company.

Overweight and obesity among Poles

In 2019, the Polish polling institute CBOS conducted research (cebos.pl, 2019) to see what percentage of Poles are overweight or obese. It found that more than half of Poles (59%) have a problem with excessive body weight, including one fifth (21%) with obesity. It is estimated that in 2035 over 35% of adult men (over 20 years of age) and over 25% of adult women in Poland will struggle with obesity (WOA, 2023).

Physical activity of Poles

The prevalence of overweight and obesity is caused by insufficient physical activity among Poles. According to the WHO, adults are recommended to undertake around 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise. The percentage of Poles who regularly engage in physical activity in their free time is 48%. However, when we exclude recreational walking, this figure drops to 28% (MSiT, 2023).

The effects of physical inactivity

Obesity has a number of health consequences, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart diseases, depression and musculoskeletal problems. If we look at it more broadly, weight problems are not only an issue for employees but also for the employer. The problem may manifest itself through an increase in absenteeism due to illness, or presenteeism (a decrease in productivity).

Awareness at organisations

The National Centre for Workplace Health Promotion (Krajowe Centrum Promocji Zdrowia w Miejscu Pracy) conducted a survey among employees from over 1,000 medium and large organisations to find out who takes responsibility for managing employee health (KCPZwMP, 2024).

The survey results are as follows:

- 35% – owners, CEOs, board members;
- 32% – employees in charge of HR and People & Culture departments;
- 25% – independent employees reporting directly to management;
- 8% – employees of occupational health and safety functions;

In addition, 55% of respondents noted that people taking care of employees' health are not well prepared for this role. Only 8% of respondents believe that it is quite the opposite.

“Santander Pomaga”, or a sports challenge in the spirit of helping

Considering the disturbing statistics regarding obesity and lack of physical activity, Santander Bank Polska invited all employees to take part in the joint physical activity as part of the “Santander Pomaga” (“Santander Helps”) campaign. The leitmotif and symbol of the campaign was the sloth, who accompanied the participants for the 30 days of the initiative.

The aim of “Santander Helps” was to:

- create a health-oriented culture at the bank,
- promote healthy habits related to regular sports activity among employees,
- bond teams,
- foster a culture of collaboration.

The sports challenge involved collecting points for activity in selected disciplines, including walking, running, cycling and many other exercises. The points were then converted into zlotys to be donated to charity. During the challenge, employees could work individually or in teams – the top three groups received additional funds that they could provide to a charity of their choice.

Communication was a key aspect of the initiative – it was launched a week before the start of the campaign to inform people about the registration process and give them the space to test the application.

During the challenge, weekly, partial summaries were presented to make the results transparent to everyone.

Summary of the “Santander Helps” campaign

The campaign attracted great interest from employees. Over 2,000 employees (approx. 20% of all the workforce) signed up for the challenges; they walked/ rode over 225,000 km, which is equivalent to five times around the Earth.

The campaign also helped create and bond 134 teams; 365 employees completed 30 days of regular exercise training. All this took place in the spirit of sporting competition that resulted in meeting 100% of the intended charity target.

Our numbers speak for themselves. Activities encouraging employees to engage in sports activities are no longer a whim of units responsible for occupational health and safety and wellbeing at organisations, but have become an actual business necessity. It is a real practice that builds employee engagement and retains talent in the organisation.

Summary

The modern approach to occupational health and safety in the office environment is evolving towards a more integrated and holistic model that goes beyond standard health measures. The article discusses key aspects of modern occupational health and safety in the context of practices used at Santander Bank Polska, including the ergonomics of workstations, the promotion of physical and mental health and adaptation to new work models, such as hybrid work. These activities support a culture of safety in offices and the social responsibility of the organisation. Experience shows the need for an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of ergonomics, occupational psychology and technology to ensure employee safety and wellbeing.

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Theoretical perspective

Chapter 4



Management perspective:

The key role of senior management and HR in the successful implementation and application of OHS rules.



Marta Pszczoła,
psychologist, psychotherapist and leader,
Head of the Culture and Talent Management
Department at Santander Bank Polska S.A

Safety at work starts from the top – leaders set standards and create a culture that either protects employees or puts them at risk. What actions taken by senior management have the greatest impact on the successful implementation of occupational health and safety rules? And why is their buy-in crucial for the entire organisation? Read this article to find out.

Key areas of management responsibility for OHS

The role of senior management in the area of occupational health and safety is not just a formality – it is the foundation that influences the effectiveness of OHS activities throughout the company. There are five key aspects of this responsibility:

- Shaping the organisational culture

Leaders set the priorities and standards that shape the organisational culture. When safety is embedded into this culture, employees treat OHS as a primary value. By setting an example and promoting OHS rules, managers show that it is not only an obligation, but a key element of the company's strategy.

- Mediating between management and employees

Senior managers act as a bridge between the executive team and operational teams. They communicate OHS objectives in a readily understood manner, monitor their implementation and report on progress. Additionally, they are often responsible for dealing with external institutions, such as the National Labour Inspectorate.

- Strategic perspective and resource allocation

Managers have a broader view of the situation, which allows them to adapt OHS policies to the specific nature of the industry and legal requirements. In this way, they can effectively allocate resources – from budget to training to protective equipment – maximising the effectiveness of their operations.

- Leadership and engagement

Leaders inspire teams to actively participate in safety activities by making it clear that health and safety is a priority. Their decisions reinforce the idea that compliance with the applicable rules is critical to the success of the organisation.

- Creating and implementing OHS policies

In cooperation with experts, managers develop occupational health and safety strategies and policies, ensuring they comply with applicable laws and standards. They also ensure that these principles are clearly laid down in internal regulations and procedures.

The role of HR in building modern OHS

It is no coincidence that responsibility for OHS is most often assigned to HR managers, as HR combines personnel management with adherence to rules and regulations that are designed to protect the health and safety of employees. HR managers play both a strategic and operational role, ensuring that health and safety matters are integrated with the organisation's HR policies.

The HR head can and should incorporate OHS elements in all key processes, including:

- Recruitment and onboarding: The HR head ensures that new hires become familiar with OHS regulations early on (that is during induction training).
- Training and development: Ensures the organisation of regular OHS training, tailored to job positions and the specific nature of the organisation.
- Performance reviews: May introduce elements related to compliance with OHS regulations into the staff performance reviews.
- Personnel management: The HR head must also take into account findings from reports on accidents at work, occupational diseases or reports of violations of OHS rules and initiate internal audits or reviews of OHS systems to assess their effectiveness in order to ensure continuity of work and constant availability of human resources.
- Internal communication: Reflects OHS aspects in messages sent to managers and employees.
- Builds and fosters an organisational culture that prioritises OHS.

The role of modern HR is to ensure that health and safety is perceived as an integral part of every employee's responsibility, and not just as a formal requirement. The role of the HR head with regard to occupational health and safety is broad and includes strategic, operational and safety culture-building activities within the organisation. Their task is to embed OHS into HR processes, cooperate with other departments and external institutions, and ensure that the organisation is compliant, and employees are aware of the importance of and maintain a safe working environment. Thanks to this role, HR becomes a key partner in creating a responsible and sustainable organisation.

More broadly, you can say that the role of management in the area of occupational health and safety is not only to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, but above all to build awareness – we are not talking about formal standards, but about real actions that save lives and health. By taking a strategic perspective and acting as an interface between the executive board and the rest of the organisation, senior managers can effectively embed OHS into their daily operations and make it part of the company's long-term strategy.



Psychological aspects of OHS

Occupational safety and psychology: A comprehensive approach to occupational health and safety



Małgorzata Furtak,
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Wellbeing Office at Santander Bank Polska S.A

Whether it is production, office or any other environment, modern OHS should take into account the psychological aspects of work safety.

The role of OHS experts must not be limited to assessing the physical working conditions – equally important are the psychological and psychosocial factors that affect employees' performance, their ability to cope with hazards and their response to crisis situations.

Psychological aspects in modern OHS

Stress, motivation, engagement, mental condition and relationships in the workplace are closely linked to safety at work.

Man is the key element of the work system, while also being the most sensitive one. Research shows that chronic work-related stress can lead to burnout, reduced concentration and an increase in the number of accidents at work.

The report "Occupational Safety in Poland 2023" points out that proper stress management and prevention of psychosocial risk factors can significantly improve employee safety.

One of the key tasks of occupational psychology is to identify psychosocial threats, such as conflicts in the team, time pressure or excessive workload.

Modern OHS systems address these aspects by introducing training in stress management, time and task management, and building a supportive organisational culture.

Psychological flexibility in the workplace

The concept of psychological flexibility plays an increasingly important role in modern OHS. As emphasised by the Central Institute for Labour Protection (Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy, CIOP), psychological flexibility, namely the employee's ability to adapt in the face of changes and challenges, greatly affects the level of safety in the workplace. Employees with a high level of psychological flexibility are better prepared to cope with difficulties and stressful situations, which results in fewer accidents.

Psychological flexibility can be promoted in the organisation through broadly understood psychoeducation and various forms of training, including on breathing and relaxation techniques.

In its report, CIOP observes that programmes supporting psychological flexibility bring benefits to both employees and employers, increasing performance and reducing psychosocial risks.

Modern approaches to psychological aspects of OHS

Mental health plays a key role in the modern approach to OHS, becoming an integral element of safety systems. More and more organisations are taking action to reduce the stigma attached to mental health problems in the workplace by providing access to consultations with psychologists or coaches, and implementing wellness programmes tailored to employee needs. Increasingly often we see the OHS function being integrated with wellbeing teams. This way, the organisation can approach employee wellbeing comprehensively. Carefully designed actions in this area include long-term programmes that support both individual wellbeing and healthy team relationships.

Another important new trend is the use of positive psychology in building a safety culture. Focusing on employees' strengths and their positive potential can significantly boost the effectiveness of OHS activities. Recognising and rewarding compliance with safety rules, creating an atmosphere of trust and openness, and getting employees involved in health and safety processes through workshops and consultations are examples of activities that increase engagement and a sense of ownership.

OHS experts who follow new trends increasingly focus on customising their approach. Each employee has different needs, experiences and preferences. This is why modern OHS takes into account individual differences, such as the level of knowledge, cognitive abilities and learning styles. Personalised training and customised development plans will only increase the effectiveness of OHS education, in addition to motivating employees to follow safety rules.

A new approach to safety – Sidney Dekker

In this context, a reference should be made to Sidney Dekker's concept presented in his book "Safety Differently: Human Factors for a New Era." The author proposes a more progressive approach to safety management in organisations, which steers away from traditional methods focused on enforcing compliance and analysing errors. Instead, he places emphasis on understanding human behaviours, supporting resilience and building a safety culture based on trust.

Key ideas presented in the book:

- People are not the problem, people are the solution

Dekker argues that workers should not be viewed as the main source of errors, but as key participants of safety systems. It is people who most often detect risks and adapt to changing working conditions. Instead of punishing mistakes, their causes should be investigated, and employee development should be supported.

- Moving away from a “blame culture”

Traditional approaches to safety are often characterised by assigning blame for incidents. Dekker suggests focusing on the systems and processes that led to errors, rather than on individual employee decisions. Responsibility should be shared at the organisation level, which helps build trust.

- Safety as an ability to adapt

Safety is not static: it is about the ability of an organisation to adapt in the face of change and unpredictable events. Dekker suggests that instead of trying to eliminate all risks, organisations should develop resilient systems to respond fast to emerging problems.

- Safety culture

Organisational culture is the foundation of safety. Dekker emphasises that a truly effective safety culture relies on leadership commitment, transparency and continuous learning from workers' experiences. Safety is a shared responsibility of the entire organisation.

- Innovation in the approach to safety

The author advocates for moving away from traditional thinking about safety. He introduces the concept of “Safety Differently” as a movement that promotes a more people-centred and creative approach to risk management.

Dekker suggests that organisations should invest in employee skills and autonomy, and analyse work systems holistically rather than focusing solely on individual failures. They should build systems that are more resilient and flexible in the face of risk and inevitable crises.

To conclude, a brief suggestion from me. When designing any solutions, remember that modern OHS is not just a set of rules, but a philosophy that puts people at the centre – as a solution, not as a problem.



Social aspects of OHS

Sociological aspects of modern OHS: the perspective of society and health sociology



Ewa Ulicz,
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GrowSPACE Foundation

Modern OHS goes beyond the workplace, encompassing the broader social context and sociological health drivers. The article looks at aspects of health sociology in relation to occupational health and safety, including how social inequalities, cultural norms and health care systems affect the perception and implementation of OHS principles. It also discusses the role of modern OHS in building socially responsible organisations and improving the wellbeing of society as a whole.

Occupational health and safety and social science disciplines

In the social sciences, OHS is an area of particular interest for two disciplines: sociology of health and sociology of work.

Sociology of health emphasises that the health and safety of individuals are shaped by a wide range of social factors, such as social class, education, access to health care and cultural norms. In the context of OHS, this means that effective occupational safety strategies must take these conditions into account. In the modern approach, OHS is a tool that not only protects workers but also promotes social justice and public health (Marmot, 2005; Link & Phelan, 1995).

In turn, the sociology of work deals with the social aspects of the work environment, including issues related to occupational health and safety.

Presented below are the key areas where sociology of work connects with OHS:

- Interpersonal relationships in the workplace

The sociology of work examines how relationships between employees and between employees and management affect compliance with OHS regulations. Good relationships and open communication can foster a better understanding of safety rules, while conflicts can lead to procedures being ignored and cause an increase in risk.

- Safety culture

The sociology of work helps us understand how values, standards and beliefs prevailing in the organisation shape its approach to occupational health and safety. Safety culture is a set of informal rules that can support or hinder compliance with formal procedures. Sociological research allows us to identify barriers to building this culture.

- Division of labour and hierarchy

An analysis of the organisational structure and division of labour is important to the understanding of how responsibility for safety is distributed internally. Sociology examines whether hierarchical structures promote adherence to OHS rules or lead to their neglect (for example, due to time pressure or workload).

- Psychosocial risk factors

The sociology of work examines the impact of stress, bullying, time pressure and job insecurity on the health and safety of employees. Psychosocial risk factors can contribute to an increased number of accidents and health problems, which makes them an important element of OHS.

- Employee participation

The sociology of work examines the extent to which employees have influence on decision-making processes related to safety. Getting employees involved in creating OHS policies and reporting hazards helps increase their commitment to compliance.

- Impact of technological change

New technologies change working conditions and cause the emergence of new risks. The sociology of work examines how employees adapt to those changes and how those changes affect social relationships in the workplace, which has implications for risk management.

- Informal work organisation

The sociology of work examines how informal groups and workplace practices influence compliance with OHS rules. For example, informal group standards may support safety rules or, conversely, encourage ignoring them, e.g., through a pressure to speed up work.

- Education and social awareness

The sociology of work examines how education, awareness of risks and attitudes towards OHS may vary across social and cultural groups. This research helps design more effective training programmes.

- Discrimination and marginalisation in the context of occupational health and safety

The sociology of work also examines whether certain groups, such as migrant workers, women in male-dominated sectors, or elderly people, are more vulnerable to workplace hazards due to social inequalities.

- Response to accidents and crises

The sociology of work is a field of science that studies interpersonal relations, work organisation and the influence of social factors on the work environment. In the context of OHS, sociology provides tools and concepts that facilitate the understanding of how social factors influence worker safety, performance and health.

The sociology of work also looks at how occupational communities respond to occupational accidents and crises, and how these incidents affect workplace relationships and long-term changes in organisational culture.

Precisely because of the wide scope of issues analysed, social sciences can provide important support for the work of OHS experts and make a unique contribution to the understanding of OHS by exploring social mechanisms and relationships in the workplace. Research in those disciplines can help organisations manage safety more effectively by taking into account psychosocial risk factors, safety culture and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Social determinants of occupational safety

One of the key areas of interest of the sociology of work in the OHS context are the social determinants of occupational safety. Organisational structure, organisational culture and relations between employees have a huge impact on the level of compliance with OHS rules.

For example, hierarchical organisational structures may encourage workers to conceal safety issues out of fear of repercussions. In turn, organisations that promote cooperation and open communication identify risks more easily and implement preventive measures more effectively.

Safety culture, often analysed by the sociology of work, refers to the common values, norms and beliefs that prevail within the organisation in relation to OHS. Research shows that organisations where leaders actively promote safety culture report a lower number workplace injuries.

Psychosocial factors vs employee health

The sociology of work pays particular attention to the psychosocial aspects of the work environment, such as stress, team conflicts, and time pressure. These factors have a direct impact on the mental and physical health of employees, as well as on their ability to comply with OHS regulations. Research shows that chronic work-related stress can lead to burnout, reduced concentration and an increase in the number of accidents at work.

Sociological research also makes it possible to identify groups that are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of psychosocial factors, such as temporary workers, people employed on precarious contracts or migrants. In such cases, recommended strategies include psychological support, flexible forms of work organisation and building trust in professional relationships.

OHS in the social context

It should be emphasised that social inequalities have a significant impact on access to safe working conditions and OHS education. Workers with lower social status or employed in high-risk sectors (e.g., agriculture, construction, heavy industry) often face poorer working conditions, lack of access to adequate training, higher occupational risks and work-related illnesses.

Modern OHS should work to reduce these inequalities, including by providing equal educational and technological opportunities for employees from various sectors.

The influence of culture and social norms

The perception of work safety principles is deeply rooted in culture. In societies dominated by the culture of "heroism" at work (e.g. readiness to work despite risks), OHS rules tend to be ignored. Modern OHS must take into account these cultural differences by adapting educational strategies and promoting positive standards that put a premium on health and safety.

OHS as an element of public health

Occupational safety is of critical importance to public health. Occupational illnesses and injuries impact not only individuals, but also their families and entire communities. Investing in modern OHS systems can help reduce health care costs and improve the quality of life within the society.

The role of organisations in the social context of OHS

More and more organisations are embedding health and safety considerations into their CSR strategies. A socially responsible approach to OHS means investing in technologies that increase safety, educating employees and their families about health and hygiene, supporting local communities through preventive actions and promoting healthy lifestyles. This can be achieved, for example, by educational programmes addressed to communities, focusing on preventing occupational diseases and improving working conditions.

Sociology of health and the perception of OHS

The sociology of health emphasises that working conditions are among the key determinants of health (Marmot, 2005). Working in a hazardous environment generates a greater risk of occupational illness, injury and mental health problems. OHS rules can counteract these impacts by minimising risks in the workplace, improving the ergonomics of workstations and educating people about healthy lifestyles.

In many communities, occupational illnesses are stigmatised, which may discourage workers from reporting health problems. Modern OHS should counteract this stigmatisation through educational campaigns, psychological support and building trust between employees and organisations.

Practical OHS solutions in the social context

Social education in the field of OHS should be addressed not only to employees, but also to local communities. It may include information campaigns on occupational diseases, programmes promoting healthy lifestyles, and educating children and young people on work safety.

Technologies such as mobile applications and employee health monitoring systems can also be used to support the health of working communities, for example through the implementation of early detection systems to help prevent accidents and occupational diseases, the use of screening tests or encouraging periodic medical checkups. At the same time, public policies should support workers in high-risk sectors by ensuring access to health care, regulating minimum safety standards and supporting programmes for the families of injured workers.

Occupational safety as an element of the social system

Modern OHS cannot be viewed solely as a set of rules and procedures applicable in the workplace. It should be treated as a part of a broader social system that affects the health and wellbeing of individuals and society. Safety rules may be implemented more effectively and workers' quality of life may be enhanced if due regard is given to vital sociological aspects, such as social inequalities, work culture or stigmatisation of occupational diseases.

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The image features a large, vibrant red semi-circle on the right side, which serves as a background for the title. To the left of this semi-circle, there are several horizontal light blue lines of varying lengths. Below the red semi-circle, there is a light blue square. In the bottom left corner, there are several concentric red lines that curve upwards and to the right. The overall design is modern and minimalist, using a limited color palette of red, light blue, and white.

Appendix

Recommendations of National Labour Inspectorate

**Conclusions, observations after one
year of entry into force of the new
regulation on occupational health and
safety at workstations equipped with
screen monitors**

It has been more than a year since the entry into force of the amended Regulation of the Polish Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 1 December 1998 on occupational health and safety at workstations equipped with screen monitors.

The amendments bring the regulation in line with the technological advances that have taken place since its original enactment date, that is over the last 25 years. For example, the somewhat archaic terms "floppy disk drive" and "trackball" have been removed from the definition of "workstation". In addition, the amended regulation relaxed certain health and safety and ergonomics requirements for workstations equipped with screen monitors (included in an annex thereto, relating to computer equipment and furniture).

The regulation contains a revised definition of a workstation, which should be understood as a work space along with:

- basic equipment, including a screen monitor, keyboard, mouse or other input devices, and software with a user interface;
- chair and table;
- optional accessories, including a disk drive, printer, scanner, document holder and footrest.

The regulation also repeals point 3 in § 2, containing the definition of a computer system.

In § 3(4), it was specified that the regulation does not apply to portable systems not intended for use at a workstation for at least half of the daily working time.

A significant change was also introduced in § 8(2), as it introduced the obligation to provide workers not only with glasses, but also with corrective contact lenses.

In addition, an annex to the regulation sets out specific solutions to be applied for portable systems that are intended for use at a workstation for at least half of the daily working time. In such circumstances, the workstation should be equipped with a stationary screen monitor or a stand ensuring that the screen can be positioned in such a way that its upper edge is at the employee's eye level. Moreover, the workstation must have an additional keyboard and mouse.

The amended regulation imposes on employers the obligation to adapt workstations equipped with screen monitors set up before the date of entry into force of the regulation to the minimum health and safety and ergonomics requirements specified in that regulation within six months of the date of entry into force. This means that currently all workstations should meet the requirements of the amended regulation on occupational health and safety at workstations equipped with screen monitors.

Over the past year, in connection with the publication of the amendments, the Polish Chief Labour Inspectorate (GIP) alone has received tens of inquiries from citizens, companies and organisations regarding the application of the new provisions. In addition, the hotline run by the National Labour Inspectorate (PIP) answered tens of questions regarding the implementation of the new regulations.

At the same time, since the date of entry into force of the regulation, the National Labour Inspectorate received several dozen of complaints regarding non-compliance with the regulation. However, upon investigation, inspectors found that only several of those complaints were valid.

Legal advice was sought mainly with regard to the following issues:

- Application of the regulation to workstations equipped with non-computer devices having a screen monitor.
- Providing contact lenses for employees.
- Requirements for chair design.
- Application of the regulation to employees working remotely – many questions concerned the need to ensure a laptop stand and an additional keyboard.
- Proper set up of a workstation equipped with a screen monitor.

When aggregated, the reported problems concerned several subjects in total. Overall, this shows that employers had no difficulties implementing the changes introduced in the regulation.

A notable increase in inquiries regarding the new requirements for workstations equipped with screen monitors was noted at the time of publication of the amendments. Today, inquiries are far less frequent.

Answers to many of the questions received are published on the website of the National Labour Inspectorate.

Recommendations of the Chief Labour Inspector for the practical application of the provisions

In the context of the changes to the applicable requirements, a reference should be made to the most important recommendations of the National Labour Inspectorate.

First of all, it should be noted that, in accordance with § 3, the regulation does not apply to:

- drivers' cabins and control cabins of machines and vehicles;
- computer systems on board of vehicles;
- computer systems intended mainly for public use;
- portable systems not intended for use at a workstation for at least half of the daily working time;
- calculators, cash registers and other devices with small screens for presenting data or measurements;
- typewriters with a screen display.

Accordingly, the regulation do not apply to such devices as calculators, cash registers and other devices with small screens for presenting data or measurements, or to portable systems not intended for use at a workstation for at least half of the daily working time.

As regards the provision of contact lenses, in accordance with § 8(2) of the regulation, the employer must provide employees with corrective glasses or corrective contact lenses, in accordance with a doctor's recommendation, if the results of the eye examination carried out as part of preventive health care point to the need for their use during work with a screen monitor. At the same time, the time spent working by the employee in front of a screen monitor is important – the implementing act defines “employee” as any person working for the employer, including an apprentice and trainee, who uses a screen monitor during work for at least half of the daily working time.

For this reason, both the need for and the type of eyesight correction during work depend on the doctor's recommendation contained in a medical certificate issued following examinations carried out as part of preventive health check-ups for employees. In addition, the obligation contained in § 8(2) of the regulation applies only to employees (and apprentices or trainees) who operate a device with a screen monitor for at least half of the daily working time.

The regulation does not specify details of how the above obligation needs to be followed. This means that matters related to the implementation of the obligation to provide employees with corrective glasses and contact lenses should be contained in the work regulations or other internal documents of the employer. At the same time, one should bear in mind that in accordance with Article 237^{11a} of the Labour Code, all activities related to occupational health and safety should be consulted with employees or their representatives.

An annex to the regulation sets out solutions to be applied when using portable systems intended for use at a workstation for at least half of the daily working time. As mentioned earlier, in such a situation the workstation should be equipped with a stationary screen monitor or a stand ensuring that the screen can be positioned in such a way that its upper edge is at the employee's eye level. Moreover, the workstation must have an additional keyboard and mouse.

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Note that based on the previous wording ("portable systems not intended for use at a workstation"), most users of portable systems were required to follow the provisions in question. This means that when providing an employee with a technical device with a screen monitor (taking into account other application exclusions in this respect), including a portable device intended for use at a workstation, e.g. a laptop, the workstation should meet the requirements specified in the regulation. At the same time, in accordance with Article 215 of the Labour Code, the work tools provided to employees must be ergonomic – this requirement will not be satisfied when a laptop (used as a device for entering data, e.g. preparing letters, invoices, etc.) has no appropriate stand, additional monitor, or additional keyboard.

At the same time, it should be emphasised that the obligations that the employer must meet vis-à-vis employees that temporarily work remotely do not differ from the obligations applicable to employees who work remotely on a permanent basis (this does not apply to situations where the employee works remotely only occasionally).

Under Article 67²⁴ § 1 of the Labour Code, the employer's obligations related to the organisation of remote work (whether temporary or permanent) include:

- Providing an employee performing remote work with materials and work tools, including technical devices, necessary to perform remote work;
- Providing an employee performing remote work with the installation, service and maintenance of work tools, including technical devices, necessary to perform remote work or covering the necessary costs related to the installation, service, operation and maintenance of work tools, including technical devices, necessary to perform remote work, as well as covering the costs of electricity and telecommunications services necessary to perform remote work;
- Covering costs other than those stated above, directly related to the performance of remote work, if those costs can be reimbursed in accordance with the agreement referred to in Article 67²⁰ § 1 and 2 of the Labour Code, the regulations referred to in Article 67²⁰ § 3 and 4 of the Labour Code, the recommendation referred to in Article 67¹⁹ § 3 of the Labour Code, or the agreement referred to in the second sentence of Article 67²⁰ § 5 of the Labor Code;
- Providing employees performing remote work with the necessary training and technical assistance.

Moreover, in accordance with Article 67²⁴ § 2 and 3 of the Labour Code, the parties may establish rules governing the use by employees performing remote work of materials and work tools, including technical devices necessary to perform remote work, not provided by the employer, meeting the requirements specified in Chapter IV, Section 10 of the Labour Code. In such a case, the employee performing remote work will be entitled to a cash allowance in an amount agreed with the employer.

In view of the above, the employer has no obligation to equip the remote workstation with furniture, e.g. a chair, or cover the costs of the equipment, unless arranged otherwise in accordance with the above provisions of the Labour Code regarding the performance of remote work by employees, i.e. in an agreement, regulations or instructions issued by the employer in relation to remote work.

Having said that, in connection with the new requirements of the above regulation, depending on the arrangements made in accordance with the above provisions of the Labour Code concerning the performance of remote work by employees, employers should assess individual workstations, and if the assessment shows that they do not meet the applicable requirements, the necessary adaptation measures should be taken. It should be noted that all workstations, including remote workstations, should be set up in accordance with the applicable regulations and health and safety rules.

With respect to all workstations equipped with screen monitors, the furniture provided by the employer should meet the requirements of the regulation – for this reason, it is not permitted to use any additional pillows, back pads, etc. and other solutions that are intended to meet those requirements indirectly.

At the same time, in a situation where the employer adapts a workstation equipped with a screen monitor to the needs of a person with a disability, the needs of that employee must be taken into account in the first place (they override the requirements of the above regulation). In such matters, employers should consult the occupational medicine service – under Article 6(1)(c) of the Act of 27 June 1997 on occupational medicine services (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 437), the role of this body is to provide employers and employees with advice on work organisation, ergonomics, physiology and psychology of work. The costs incurred by the employer on such consultations are also included in Article 26(1)(2) of the Act on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons.



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