

Risk assessment in industry and offices

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Abstract

The working conditions in textile and wood processing industries and in offices have been investigated using a simple risk assessment method (Tint & Kiivet, 2003). The main complaints in textile industry are high temperature in the workroom, bad ventilation, intense work and the dependence of workers' work results from the others. The main risk factors in wood processing industry are tools and equipment, heavy physical load, noise, wood dust and odours of chemicals originating from polishes. The working conditions in offices differ greatly in winter and in summer time. In summer the main complaints are high air temperature and sharp sunlight from windows, noise from the streets; but in winter the dry air and odours from the new type of floorings are the most disturbing problems for workers.

Introduction

Risk assessment in the work environment has been the topic for the Estonian researchers in work safety and health from 1996, when the EU document "Guidance of risk assessment at work" became accessible. The Estonian Occupational Health and Safety Act (on the basis of EU Dir. 89/391), which demands risk assessment at every workplace, was adopted in Estonia in 1999. In this context the main problem for managers has been finding a suitable risk assessment method. Labour inspectors are not satisfied with the majority of risk assessments carried out by employers, but they cannot improve the situation, as they have no better proposals. Considering the situation in Estonian labour market, the Labour Inspectorate of Estonia as the main institution dealing with practical risk assessment at workplaces, thinks that there have to be two different types of risk assessment methods, one for industrial activities and the other for offices. It seems that the latter might be easier but in this field different new hazards have arisen, like electromagnetic fields from mobile phones or odours of chemical materials used nowadays in offices, schools or hotels as flooring materials or by cleaning firms. So there can be problems in working conditions as in industrial rooms as in offices. The main distressing problems in industrial rooms are noise, dust, and lack of air, draught.

Method

The used in the investigation simple/flexible risk assessment method (Tint & Kiivet, 2003) is based on a two-step model (Figure 1) that could be enlarged into a six-step

In D. de Waard, K.A. Brookhuis, R. van Egmond, and Th. Boersema (Eds.) (2005), *Human Factors in Design, Safety, and Management* (pp. 129 - 133). Maastricht, the Netherlands: Shaker Publishing.