

Fact Sheet - Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S)

Introduction

Human capital is as important to sustainable commercial success as the traditional resources of raw materials, machinery, energy, land ownership and capital. Today, no company can succeed for long without a healthy and motivated workforce. Maintaining safe and healthy workplaces is therefore as much in a company's self-interest as stewardship of natural resources or increasing energy efficiency.

By implementing a well-designed Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) system, a company can keep occupational illnesses, diseases and injuries, as well as losses and work disruptions caused by exposures or accidents, to a minimum - while avoiding damage to its reputation at the same time. OH&S is increasingly seen as an integral management task and, indeed, as an important indicator of general management competence.

Why the issue is important

Companies have an ethical obligation to do all in their power to see that their employees are not injured on the job, and that visitors and contractors are not harmed either. Fulfilling this obligation requires a good OH&S management system, a 'culture' of health and safety, a bit of luck and constant vigilance.

Providing healthy workplaces and preventing accidents is not just a moral issue, but also an economic one: installations are better designed and productivity is increased, thereby boosting a company's economic performance and making it more competitive. Pursuing corporate economic goals and creating a safe and healthy working environment are, therefore, not only flip sides of the same coin, but also a matter of consistency with any quality or environmental approach.

Challenges for Holcim

Health and safety is a major issue for the cement industry. At Holcim, we place the highest value on ensuring the health and safety of our employees, subcontractors, third parties, and visitors. Yet, comparison of our performance with best-of-class companies in similar industries such as mining and heavy manufacturing shows that we do not do as well in OH&S as they do. Our challenge is to significantly improve.

Our aim is to not have a single injury resulting in death or permanent disability and to substantially reduce our lost time injury frequency rate. To achieve these targets, we have implemented a critical incident reporting system for sharing information about accidents and incidents that occur at any of our sites, and host training workshops for all relevant employees.

In the past, most Holcim Group companies had some form of OH&S policy and supporting program in place, and there were many examples of good practice within the Group. But different sites in the 70 countries in which we operate had historically different definitions, approaches and understandings of what OH&S policies and programs involve. Our challenge, therefore, was to standardize and harmonize these programs within Holcim – one that our global OH&S management standard has now addressed.

Changing cultural and behavioral patterns in order to develop healthier, safer workplaces is also a major challenge for Holcim: it means managing change across the whole organization, starting from top management. A new initiative, Passion for Safety, designed in close cooperation with international science company Dupont, has been launched to help achieve a step change in OH&S performance Group-wide.

Our commitment

As part of our overall aim to contribute to improving the quality of life of all our stakeholders, Holcim places a premium on reducing risks and eliminating injuries. To reinforce the message that company leaders must drive continuous improvement, our OH&S target is to: reduce lost time injury frequency rate by at least 30% per year from 2006 to 2009, using 2004 as a reference, until a rate of less than two is achieved.

Further, as a member of the Cement Sustainability Initiative (CSI) task force on health and safety, we have led the discussion on common industry-wide definitions and reporting. The task force identified the elements of a robust OH&S management system to be applied throughout the industry and has issued guidelines which are included in the Agenda for Action's 2005 Progress Report.

Overall, we aim to apply a systematic and structured approach to managing OH&S, and our policy, targets, and toolbox support this commitment. Our primary goal is to implement measures to control risks and eliminate injuries, striving for continual improvement in our OH&S performance.

Related publicly available information

Holcim publishes Corporate Sustainable Development Reports (CSDRs) each second year, with performance information and data updated annually on our website. Together with additional fact sheets and other SD-related information, this can be found at:

www.holcim.com/sustainable/