

Approach to Workplace Safety Is Changing for the Better, Says Survey



The approach to occupational health and safety is changing for the better all over the world, says the findings of an [international survey](#) conducted by DNV GL – Business Assurance and the research institute GFK Eurisko. The feedback suggests that companies are shifting from a reactive attitude to a conscious management of operational issues, which is necessary to develop a real corporate culture of occupational health and safety.

The survey was conducted in Oct. 2013 on 3,860 professionals who work at prominent companies from various sectors, such as food, chemicals, metals, machinery and electrical, in Europe, North America, Central & South America and Asia. The size of the companies ranged from those employing less than 50 people (23%) to those with more than 250 employees (45%).

More than 90% of people surveyed agreed that managing health and safety at work has become an integrated part of today's corporate strategy. And 76% even implement policies above and beyond what's required by law.

Questioned on what the main risk areas are, participants principally identified operational aspects, with some interesting differences between geographical areas:

- North Americans (66%) and Swedes (55%) care most about

ergonomic aspects

- Structural deficiencies of machines and equipment are perceived as a main risk area especially by Asians (54%).

But rather than strategically working on prevention, companies find operational initiatives to be the most effective. The list of the most effective actions is topped by the regular maintenance of premises (48%) and emergency measures (46%). Organizational issues such as the assessment of all risks related to health and safety (37%) and preventive measures (35%) are further down on the list.

It's no surprise that compliance with laws and regulations is the primary motive driving companies to develop actions to safeguard health and safety at work (87%), with internal policies coming next (73%). Other motivators include:

- Brand protection (24%)
- Public opinion (19%)
- Competitiveness (19%).

Lack of financial resources (31%) and focus on short term results (26%) are the main obstacles to making progress in managing workplace safety all over the world.

As for the future, more than 90% of people surveyed expect to maintain or increase investments for workplace safety in the next three years.

And although professionals all over the world expect a reduction in all kinds of operational hazards, they still plan on conducting workplace safety initiatives, including training for employees (63%), assessment of all risks (63%) and adoption of management systems or prevention programs (59%).