

## Health Surveillance

A number of members are asking questions about health surveillance.

### **What is Occupational Health Risk Management?**

Occupational health risk management is about putting in place a system to manage the risk of ill health caused by work activities.

At times you may employ occupational health service providers or others - such as occupational health professionals or other health and safety professionals to give you advice and to help you manage any residual health risks once control measures have been introduced to reduce risks. Managing occupational health service provision is crucial to ensure all parties involved work together effectively to successfully manage risks to the health of your workers.

Taking an integrated view of all the health checks for workers can have benefits.

For example:

- Workers may feel more valued and, in turn, more motivated to kept fit to carry out their jobs.
- Encouraging workers to look after their health and wellbeing to improve their quality of life and life expectancy is likely to have an impact on their attitudes and behaviours towards workplace health risks.
- Speaking with workers about their general health and wellbeing, or about their fitness to do their job, provides an opportunity to coach and influence regarding workplace risks.

You may provide other, more general health checks for your workers. If so, you need to be clear about the distinction between these checks and those that are required to satisfy your legal duties to safeguard the health of your workers.

Where workplace controls and any health surveillance are required, they are more likely to be successful if workers understand what they are for and how they will benefit them. Experience in the industry has also shown that providing general health and wellbeing screening and initiatives in the workplace can improve buy-in and acceptance of health surveillance to help support the management of health risks. Workers focused on looking after their own health will often be more alert to the causes of ill health on site. Be clear, of course, of what is legally required and that general health and wellbeing initiatives are not a replacement for managing workplace health risks.

### **Worker Involvement and Consultation**

Workplaces where employees are involved in taking decisions about their health are safer and healthier. Collaboration with your employees helps you to manage health risks in a practical way by:

- Helping you spot workplace risks.
- Making sure health risk controls are practical.
- Increasing the level of commitment to working in a safe and healthy way.

You must consult all your employees, in good time, on health risk matters. In workplaces where a trade union is recognised, this will be through union health and safety representatives. In non-unionised workplaces, you can consult either directly or through other elected representatives.

Consultation involves employers not only giving information to employees but also listening to them and taking account of what they say before making decisions on managing health risks.

Issues you should consult employees on include:

- Risks arising from their work.
- Proposals to manage or control these risks.
- The best ways of providing information and training.

### **What Kind of Occupational Health Provision?**

A traffic light system is a useful way of considering the variety of occupational health services available and can help you decide what is suitable and relevant for your workers and tasks they perform.

- What must be done to ensure I comply with the law? - **Red**
- What could the provider do so that I can ensure the workers I have are fit, and remain so, to safely carry out the tasks required of them? - **Amber**
- What other health screening programmes would I *like* this service provider to deliver to promote worker involvement in reducing their risks of developing ill health? - **Green**

The table overleaf outlines a simple approach to prioritising your requirements.

For more information on your legal duties, see the HSE leaflet *Consulting employees on health and safety: a brief guide to the law* ([www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.htm)).

For more information on consulting with your employees visits [www.hse.gov.uk/involvement](http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement)

PRIORITY	TYPES OF CHECK	EXAMPLES
<p><b>Red</b> You must fully consider all options to eliminate health risks or control them to a minimum</p> <p>Where health risk remains, health surveillance is appropriate to help identify what more must be done to prevent harm and protect employees</p>	<p>Legal requirements based on risk</p> <p>Health surveillance</p> <p>There are also other health checks required by driving licence law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skin checks for dermatitis from cement exposure</li> <li>• Respiratory questionnaire for silica exposure</li> <li>• Lung function tests and x-rays for silica exposure</li> <li>• Audiometry for noise exposure</li> <li>• Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) syndrome questionnaire and tests for HAV exposure</li> <li>• Biological monitoring for lead and mercury in blood, and cadmium in urine</li> <li>• Medical surveillance for asbestos and lead</li> <li>• HGV medicals for Group 2 drivers (including drivers of construction plant)</li> <li>• Health checks for night workers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Amber</b> Industry accepted practice</p>	<p>'Fitness for task' health checks for safety critical tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health monitoring for musculoskeletal problems</li> <li>• Pre-placement health checks</li> <li>• Forklift/car drivers' health assessment</li> <li>• Breathing apparatus user medicals</li> <li>• Vision tests for identified roles</li> <li>• Exit medicals</li> <li>• Drug and alcohol testing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Green</b> Further check to monitor the health of workers</p>	<p>Health screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Height</li> <li>• Weight</li> <li>• Blood pressure</li> <li>• Cholesterol</li> </ul>