

Vivienne Stern & Associates

Occupational Health & Safety Consultant / Ergonomist
M Sc (Erg) (UCT) Post graduate Diploma in Occupational Health, (UCT).

Services:

- Occupational Health & Safety Risk Assessment / Training
- Ergonomic Risk Assessments
- Medical Surveillance

Website: <http://www.vivienstern.co.za> Email: vivienne@vivienstern.co.za
P O Box 4970 Cape Town 8000 Cell: 082 857 3649

Cape Times, 8th October 2008 in the Occupational Health and Safety feature.

“Right to know”

The Hazardous Chemical Substances Regulations, contained in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993), established the principle of the “Right to know” requiring employers to carry out a risk assessment to determine the hazards associated with the chemicals and what safe measures need to be taken to protect the health of their exposed employees. Control strategies, air monitoring and medical surveillance are contingent upon this exposure assessment.

Companies need to work within the confines of the law in order to limit exposure to any liability arising from the workers exposure to hazardous chemical substances. The number of occupational diseases caused by chemicals is not well known, partly because the workers compensation system and the factory inspectorate are still concerned with accidents and injuries.

Chemical suppliers have introduced new chemicals onto the market with little concern for the likely health consequences on the people exposed to these materials. Chemicals are marketed under a variety of misleading brand-names and companies deflect the efforts of health and safety professionals to establish their chemical composition by appealing to “commercial confidentiality”. Information when it is supplied is often insufficient, irrelevant or misleading.

New chemicals are being introduced into workplaces, while large numbers of chemicals already in use pose significant long-term threats.

Chemical hazards are insidious, gases without colour or odour, acids can cause blindness and give terrifying burns, flammable gases can leak undetected and explode, chemical powders can be handled for years without any obvious problems and then suddenly the worker is seized by cancer, chronic liver or kidney disease all of which are irreversible and sometimes fatal.

The regulations require suitably qualified occupational health consultants to carry out chemical risk assessment and medical surveillance.

Vivienne Stern is an Occupational Health Consultant/Ergonomist working as a consultant to industry.

Occupational Health and Safety is a cross-disciplinary area concerned with protection of the safety, health and welfare of employees incorporating the disciplines of Occupational Hygiene, Safety and Medicine through various strategies, including risk assessment and risk control.

Ergonomics is the study of efficiency in working environments and is fundamental for competitiveness, quality and injury prevention in the workplace.

Examples of the above disciplines include:

- Identification, evaluation & control of risk in the workplace to minimise or prevent exposure
- Assisting with recruitment; ensuring fitness to work.
- Screening for signs and symptoms of illness associated with exposure to hazards.
- Ergonomic Risk Assessment
- Training of employees so they are made conversant with the hazards to health and safety attached to any work which they have to perform.

Vivienne Stern & Associates have worked in diverse spheres with clients in banking, educational, medical, automotive, waste, oil, wind & solar power industries.

Working in partnership with your company, we provide an occupational health and safety service tailored to your needs and budget.

- Our services are dynamic and flexible providing support to your company on a project specific basis and/or on an ongoing basis.
- We offer a wide range of services to meet the unique and changing needs of your company. These will depend on the size and structure of your company and other external factors, such as the current business environment and government legislation.
- We are able to provide a comprehensive occupational health service or a specific service, such as medical surveillance or training.
- We are happy to work alongside existing occupational health services to fill a gap in the service or help with an overload.
- Design and implementation of an Occupational Health and Safety management system, including standard operating procedures and ensuring legislative compliance.

Our Services Include:

- Design and implementation of an Occupational Health and Safety management system, including standard operating procedures and ensuring legislative compliance.
- Environmental, Health and Safety Risk assessment (HIRA), including ergonomic risks.
- Development of standards of fitness for a specific job facilitating a consistent set of requirements against which applicants can be assessed in a medical screening program preventing expensive mistakes in recruitment.
- Medical Surveillance & Biological Monitoring including pre-employment, exit and periodic medical screening of employees for medical conditions that may affect their ability to perform their work.
- Health and Safety Training (including Ergonomics).
- Wellness days: Health risk assessments for employees e.g. blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, HIV/Aids, eye tests, BMI.

WHY OUTSOURCE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH?

Due to continuously evolving health and safety issues which are gaining more complexity many businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to coordinate and implement an effective health and safety programme.

Amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act places the responsibility on employers to provide appropriate occupational health services to their employees.

Businesses usually prefer to concentrate on their core business objectives and outsource the services of specialists with the knowledge and understanding of policy, compliance requirements and strategy for effective implementation.

We are committed to providing a high quality occupational health service which:

- Supports and enhances the employer's health and safety programme.
- Advises on fulfilling statutory responsibilities for workplace safety, minimising risks and ensuring legislative compliance.
- Gives the employer evidence-based Occupational Health advice, ensuring the correct placement of employees.
- Promotes the physical, psychological and social well-being of all employees, thereby minimizing ill health, enhancing productivity and reducing medical and legal claims.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Occupational Health is a preventive discipline, dedicated to reducing the likelihood of adverse events leading to injuries, illness or material losses. Central to this is the science of Risk Assessment.

Occupational Health Risk Assessment

This is the systematic examination of the activities and processes in the workplace, to determine the probability of harmful events, and the extent of the potential damage. This evaluation comprises a careful evaluation of the degree of exposure of the target groups (or probability of an adverse event), and the consequences (or harmfulness) of this exposure. For example:

- Workplace Health and Safety risk assessments
- Hazardous chemical substance risk assessment
- Legal compliance audit: to determine the compliance to the requirements of the Occupational Health & Safety Act
- Occupational Hygiene surveys

Outcomes of Workplace Health & Safety Risk Assessments

- The Hazards: what, how harmful, where, how much
- The Exposures: Quantitative and Qualitative
- The Risks (combination of Harmfulness and Exposure)
- The Risk Control action plans ("Corrective Action Report")

Safety program

- Legal compliance with regulations and obligations to the workforce
- The strategies following Risk Assessment, including:
- Task Observation & Safe Work Practices
- Implementation of the Hierarchy of Controls
- Corrective Action Reporting

Hygiene monitoring program

- Outcomes of measured exposures to hazards, evaluation and control measures (noise, fumes, dust, etc.)

Medical surveillance program

- Initial and subsequent health questionnaire, examination and screening test results
- Relevant medical and occupational history
- Outcomes Analysis
- Impacts of the findings (restrictions, if any)
- Adverse Effects
- Corrective Action Reporting

Health Promotion

- Promotion and maintenance of employee health
- Health risk screening and education
- Wellness days

MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

The Medical Surveillance Programme:

- **Ensures employees are fit** for and suited to the work they are to do, and meet the inherent health requirements for the relevant occupation.
- **Ensures that the health of employees** is not adversely affected by their work.
- **Establishes baseline medical information** for all employees, especially those exposed to health hazards, reducing employer's liabilities.

Service components include:

- **Pre-employment medical examinations** enabling the correct placement of workers according to their physical and mental compatibility to job specifications.
- **Exit medical examinations** recording the health status of workers on termination of service to prevent later litigation.
- **Employee health assessment** and ongoing management including:
 - Health policy development
 - Medical surveillance programme and periodic medical examinations to monitor the health status of workers exposed to health hazards in the workplace as laid down by occupational health legislation.
- **Compliance to all legislative and administrative requirements** including industry specific compliance.
- **Biological monitoring:** Laboratory testing of exposed employees according to the requirements of the Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Substances (Reg. 1179 of 28 August 1995) and other relevant legislation.
- **Ergonomic surveillance**
 - Monitoring, support, training and education
 - Regular walk-throughs at the workplace by an Ergonomist to monitor and identify health risks
- **Checklists, surveys and recommendations** for a diverse range of work-related muscular and back problems
- **Professional occupational medical consultancy**, development of programmes and procedures.
- **Interaction and enhancements** with company safety programme.
- **Management reports** (for planning, problem solving and decision making)

ERGONOMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Ergonomics is fundamental for competitiveness, quality and injury prevention in the workplace.

Practical and easy to implement ergonomic solutions to real problems using low-cost, no-cost interventions. This efficient approach to problem solving has proven effective in reducing workplace injuries and their associated costs in industrial and office environments and improving productivity, profitability and the work environment.

Ergonomic surveys are conducted in order to identify key opportunities for improvement, often leading to specific interventions, with significant real improvements in working conditions, be it in an office, a factory, a building site or any other place of employment.

Managers experience positive, measurable changes in absenteeism, accidents, productivity and significant cost savings by implementing ergonomic interventions:

- Decrease lost working days
- Decrease injury risk
- Decrease mistakes/rejects
- Increase efficiency
- Increase productivity
- Improved quality
- Improved moral

Examples of Ergonomic risk assessments:

- Work site audits for job recommendations
- Computer workstation evaluations and recommendations
- Manual material handling injury risk assessments
- Hand and wrist injury risk assessments
- Rapid Upper Limb injury risk assessment

Ergonomic Audits

A starting point for ergonomic intervention or evaluation can best be determined through an audit of your current processes. This typically includes a review of your injury statistics, areas of concern, and then a walk through audit to obtain a high level understanding of your company/plant or departments current status. From here we can assist you in developing a plan to build on your current programs and initiatives.

Ergonomic Risk identification and Assessment survey

Our detailed ergonomic assessments are completed in high risk areas identified in the ergonomic audit. Assessments include an objective evaluation of workstation/equipment concerns with respect to recognized ergonomic guidelines, identification of risk factors present in the tasks required within the workstation and recommendations on workstation/task organization, procedures or equipment. As a result, this ergonomic assessment provides a detailed evaluation of the high risk areas as well as potential short and long term recommendations and solutions that could be implemented to address the risks. This can provide the framework for intervention strategies that compliment Health and Safety Legislative Requirements.

Training Sessions and Workshops

Our training sessions vary in duration from Lunch and Learn sessions (45 – 60 min) up to whole-day sessions. See **Safety Training** for further details.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act No 85 of 1993 Employees have a “Right to Know”.

Duties of Employers section, 13.(a) “Duty to inform: cause every employee to be made conversant with the hazards to his health and safety attached to any work which he has to perform, any article or substance which he has to produce, process, use, handle, store or transport and any plant or machinery which he uses, as well as with the precautionary measures required with respect to those hazards.”

Our training sessions are tailored to your specific company requirements. Our training sessions vary in duration from Lunch and Learn sessions (45 – 60 min) up to whole-day sessions. We customize our training sessions according to your specific needs. If you are considering completing any training or general educational sessions at your company, please contact us so we can discuss your needs and complete a customized proposal for you.

Examples of Training sessions:

- Chemical Hazards in the workplace
- Laboratory safety
- Health Risk assessment
- Personal protective equipment
- Respiratory protection
- Hearing protection
- Importance of hygiene and hand cleanliness
- Ergonomic Training
 - Manual Handling – Prevention of Back injury
 - Prevention of Upper limb repetitive strain injury
 - Office ergonomics – Computer workstations
 - Ergonomic Risk assessment training

PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT

Vivienne Stern, Occupational Health & Safety Consultant / Ergonomist

- Qualified Occupational Health Nurse Practitioner and Ergonomist with a Masters in Ergonomics (University of Cape Town)
- Further post-graduate qualification in Occupational Medicine (Diploma in Occupational Health, UCT)
- Qualified Training Facilitator and Health and Safety Auditor
- Part time lecturer in the department of Public Health, University of Cape Town
- Extensive experience in the field of health and safety management systems; conducting ergonomic surveys, research, training, conducting workshops, risk assessments, compiling and implementing guidelines and codes of good practise.