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THE RISK PREVENTION SYSTEM FOR WORKING SITES: RULES AND MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

The prevention of accidents at work is ruled, in all European Union members States, by specific rules and measures that must be adopted to safeguard the health and the safety of workers. In Italy, the main provision in this field is Legislative Decree **no. 626/94** that defines, for **all production activities** involving even a single worker, the rules to be observed for **the management of a prevention of risks at the workplace system**.

For activities that involve specific risks, there is further legislation that supplements what is laid down in Lgs.D. 626/94: such is the case of Lgs. D. **No. 494/96** that lays down the measures to be adopted for health and safety in **temporary and mobile sites**. The prevention system defined by the quoted legislation prescribes **global management of health and security to be implemented by:**

- carrying out an analysis and an assessment of risks to health and safety at work right from the moment when each construction stage is planned through to when these are carried out;
- identifying collective safety measures (first aid and emergency medical care; fire prevention; emergency management; etc.) in order to eliminate or reduce risks and to guarantee their effectiveness (information and training of workers) and their efficiency (maintenance and control);
- using safety and/or health signs for risks that can be avoided or reduced by taking preventive measures;
- having personal protective equipment (helmets; safety belts; ear muffs; goggles to protect the eyes; safety footwear; etc.) worn by workers (adequately instructed and trained to use them) for risks that cannot be otherwise prevented and checking that they are used correctly;
- guaranteeing a safe workplace by creating, for example, safe traffic routes;
- ensuring the coordination and the participation of all those involved (the employer; the buyer of the building to be constructed; the person in charge of the work; the coordinator of the planning of the work; the coordinator of the execution of the work; the person in charge of prevention and protection; salaried workers and independent workers through their safety representative).

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF WORKERS

Workers have **the right to:**

- receive **information** (through direct communication to which can be added, for greater effectiveness, the usual company forms of communication, for e.g.: signs, circular letters posted on the notice-board, etc) and **training** in the preventive measures taken for the job they are assigned to and in general in the procedures to be followed in case of serious danger and emergencies;
- check the implementation of health protection and safety measures through their **safety representative**¹;
- **vacate** their work post in case of serious and imminent danger that cannot be avoided;
- **abstain** - save in exceptional cases and upon duly substantiated requests- from resuming work in situations where there is still **serious and immediate danger**.

Furthermore, if a worker carries out an activity that involves occupational risks that are subject to medical surveillance by the competent doctor, he has the right to:

- receive information on the meaning of the medical checkups, on their outcome as well as a copy of his medical record upon leaving the company;
- appeal to the control Body against the competent doctor's fit-for-work opinion.

As for workers' duties, they **must:**

- take care of their own health and safety as well as that of all other persons present at the workplace, in accordance with the information and the training received, their skills, their ability and their health conditions;

¹ The safety Representative acts as the "guarantor" of the rights of the workers to safety and is **elected or appointed by the workers** in different ways according to the number of persons working for the company. **In undertakings with up to 15 workers** he may a fellow-worker elected directly by the workers, that is chosen amongst the trade union representatives in the company if there are any, or designated for more than one company, all in the same production field and in the same geographical area; **in undertakings with more than 15 workers** he must be elected or appointed by the workers from within the trade union representatives in the company and only if there are none, may he be a fellow-worker elected by the workers



- use the personal protective equipment (helmet, gloves, earmuffs, safety foot wear, etc.) made available to them in an appropriate manner, in accordance with the instructions and theoretical and practical training received;
- use the collective protection equipment, as well as machinery, devices, tools, substances and dangerous preparations in the right manner, in order to avoid their inappropriate use endangering their own health and safety or that of all other persons present at the workplace;
- report immediately to their superior disorders and shortfalls in the equipment and/or the safety devices made available, as well as any event that they are aware of that occurs at the work place and is dangerous for objects or for persons, (e.g.: fires, explosions, accidents, illness, etc.);
- not remove, modify or switch off the safety, alarm or control devices without express authorization;
- in case of emergency, take direct action, within the limits of their skills and capabilities, to eliminate or limit dangerous situations, by informing the workers' safety Representative as soon as possible;
- not refuse - save for duly substantiated reasons- being put in charge of implementing first aid, rescue work, fire-fighting and emergency management measures; follow the provisions and the instructions received for individual and collective protection;
- undergo medical check-ups (preventive and/or regular) prescribed to them by the competent doctor and/or the Supervisory Bodies;
- help to fulfil all the requirements that are laid down by the competent authority or that are in any case necessary to safeguard the health and safety of workers during their work.

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF SAFETY

Workers on working sites must know the names and be able to get in touch with the persons to be contacted for issues related to health and safety and in particular:

> For **company employees**:

- the **workers' safety representative**, to whom all safety problems are to be communicated so that he can submit them to the **Head of the prevention and protection service** designated by the employer;

- the **competent Doctor** to whom any health disorder is to be communicated (in cases where medical surveillance is compulsory).

> For **self-employed workers**:

- the **Coordinator in charge of executing the work**, who must inform them as to how to carry out the work safely;

Moreover, all workers must know the name of the **Officers** in charge of fire prevention, fire-fighting, first aid, emergency medical care, evacuation of workers in case of danger measures.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN ACCIDENT AT WORK OR AN OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

In case of an accident at work or an occupational disease all workers in Italy can turn to the national health service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale) for care as well as to the social security bodies, INAIL e INPS, for their services in accordance with their respective procedures.

SAFETY SIGNS

Safety and health at the workplace signs (the same throughout the European Union and which the workers must be informed of by the employer), are aimed at drawing immediate attention to dangerous situations or to conduct aimed at avoiding these. A poster, a colour, a light, a sound, a written text or a pictured gesture referring to an object, an activity or a given situation may be used, as the case may be.

Since these signs must respect a colour code according to their meaning, below you will find examples, frequently found in sites, that **all workers must** know.



Prohibition signs

They prohibit a behaviour that could cause danger.

These are round and have a black image on a white background; the border and the diagonal bar (from the upper left to the lower right at a 45° angle) are red.



No fork lift trucks



Do not extinguish
with water



No unauthorized persons

Warning signs

They warn of a danger.

They are triangular with a black image on a yellow background and a black border.



Overhead loads



Moving fork lift trucks



Trip hazard

Order signs

They prescribe a type of conduct.

They are round with a white image on a blue background.



Compulsory safety footwear



Compulsory personal protection against falls



Compulsory helmet

Rescue and first aid signs

They give indications concerning emergency exits or first aid and rescue vehicles.

They are square or rectangular, with a white image on a green background



Emergency route/exit



Direction to be followed



First aid