

JOINT STATEMENT OF EUROGAS, EPSU AND EMCEF ON HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE GAS SUPPLY INDUSTRY

PREAMBLE

The European Union of the Natural Gas Industry (Eurogas) and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (EMCEF) have held a joint workshop in 1999. They discussed different health and safety issues and addressed aspects of training for health and safety.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF jointly developed this paper on Health and Safety. The document sets out general principles as well as relevant training issues. It is based on national experiences and the Directives of the European Union in the field of health and safety. It is intended to complement national practices and legislation.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF wish that the document contributes to the on-going debates between the social partners on training and on health and safety issues in the different countries.

The paper marks the first and successful step towards a dialogue between the three organisations. It establishes initial ground for closer mutual co-operation and collaboration.

For EPSU

For EMCEF

For Eurogas



INTRODUCTION

1. Developments in the European Gas Supply Industry (GSI) place demands on workers, their unions, and companies and their employers' organisations.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF have discussed the challenges facing workers and companies in the GSI in the context of health and safety. The three organisations wish to stimulate debate on issues of common interest.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF have organised a workshop with the support of the European Commission (10 November 1999) which concentrated on health and safety in the GSI.

HEALTH AND SAFETY OBJECTIVE

2. This document is a statement of general principles on health and safety of workers in all aspects of their work, which may assist the social partners locally in ensuring the health and safety of workers in all aspects of their work and in sustaining and improving the health and safety performance of the GSI. The document is jointly discussed and agreed. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF are committed to ensuring that health and safety standards in the GSI are maintained and further developed.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR THE GSI

3. Many common hazards and risks occurring throughout the activities of other sectors and including those related to general good housekeeping and personal safety attitudes, are relevant as well to the GSI. These can be identified in general as chemical or physical or psychological hazards, examples of which have been discussed at the mentioned workshop e.g.

- (chemical) asbestos;
- (physical) white finger vibration;
- (psychological) stress at work;
- (combination) mobility (road safety), atypical work.

New challenges may arise from (new) developments in work organisation and circumstances, such as outsourcing or sub-contracting GSI construction projects and/or operations. Such developments will be jointly discussed for all useful purposes in future exchanges between Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

4. Although overall responsibility for the health and safety of workers rests with their employers (see EC Directive 89/391), employees play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of measures to improve health and safety.

Environmental design and work organisation to eliminate hazards, as well as considerable dependence on attitudes and behaviour of all those concerned in work is implicit in preventative health and safety policies.

Employees shall co-operate in all tasks imposed by the safety regulations, and, in co-operation with the employer, contribute to ensure a working environment and working conditions which pose as little risk as possible to health and safety.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF recognise the important contribution of education and training of management and the workforce in ensuring high standards in health and safety to ensure that employees understand clearly their implication in health and safety matters applying to themselves and to others. One objective should be to contribute to a better awareness of (information on) health and safety and to disseminate and promote knowledge of prevention measures on topics relevant to the GSI. The employer shall provide adequate and appropriate training for health and safety.

Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF note that significant changes in the nature and scope of training given to those who are responsible for managing and controlling risk and for those who advise them might be necessary to achieve the high level of health and safety in the GSI. Education and training are important to introduce appropriate culture and social behaviour of all those working in the industry.

TRAINING OF EMPLOYEES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

5. Health and safety training may take many forms as appropriate to local circumstances and the nature of the role performed by the individual. The content and training methods used will vary according to the target audience. Such training should be integrated into vocational training programmes rather than be considered as an add-on item.

Health and safety representatives shall be consulted on the planning and organisation of training programmes. Such training should be repeated where necessary and given in a way which is easily understandable. All workers in the GSI should be given appropriate training in health and safety. (including for example, women, youths and migrant workers).

6. The training should assist workers to be able :
 - to know the risks involved, as well as the causes of accidents and ill health in the GSI;
 - to acquire knowledge on the principles of accident, injury and disease prevention, including the ability to identify the risks and use prevention techniques;
 - to take the necessary action in case of serious and imminent danger;

- to understand the relationship between the partners involved in Health and Safety in the company;
- to safely use equipment;
- to be aware of the company safety policy, procedures and instructions;
- to know the legal obligations as well as agreements, codes of practice and authoritative guidance of health and safety;
- to establish and maintain safe places of work and safe systems of work;
- to know where and how to receive health surveillance.

Objects and conditions of training for the workplace are mentioned in the relevant EU and national legislations, and typically include:

- risk of fire or gas explosion
- risk of high pressure atmospheres
- health and safety requirements;
- use of work equipment;
- use of protective equipment;
- handling of loads;
- health signs;
- risks related to exposure to chemical, physical, and biological agents at work;
- risks related to exposure to noise at work;
- risks related to exposure to carcinogenics at work.

Employers shall ensure that only workers having received adequate training and instructions may have access to areas where there is a serious and specific risks.

7. Specific attention should be paid to training in the case of, at least:
 - recruitment, a transfer or change of job of a worker or group of workers;
 - new legislation or new standards;
 - a new site;
 - new work equipment and/or change of equipment;
 - use of new technologies, materials and/or products.
8. On recruitment workers are to be informed of:
 - the employer's policy/strategy for prevention of accidents and occupational injuries and diseases;
 - the company rules and procedures for dealing with the above;
 - the organisational arrangements including the role of the safety representatives, and the role of the works council/shop-stewards and trade unions. This will include the ways and means to communicate health and safety problems to the safety representatives.
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9. Identical training on health and safety shall cover those workers with a fixed-duration employment relationship.
10. Where work is subcontracted, the overall responsibility for the health and safety of the subcontractors' employees lies with the subcontractor. There is, however, an obligation on the client company to co-ordinate health and safety matters. Workers

from outside the undertaking should therefore receive appropriate instructions regarding health and safety for the worksite on which they will deploy activities. If a company in the GSI uses a contractor or subcontractor it should specify the rules and regulations on health and safety in the industry and used by the company in the contract or tender. The subcontractor will have to prove his record in upholding and maintaining these standards. This includes the training and education given to the workers on health and safety.

The contract issuing company can require additional training on health and safety to familiarise workers of the subcontractor with the rules and regulations of the place where the work is carried out.

Where co-ordination is not already regulated, when different undertakings are sharing a common workplace or work site, to allow the health and safety objectives to be attained, the opportunity of joint training courses for health and safety representatives and supervisors should be provided.

TRAINING OF WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES

11. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF recognise the important role and contribution played by workers' safety representatives in health and safety in the workplace, as provided for by national regulation. Training of workers' representatives in health and safety is either provided by the trade unions or jointly with the employer. Apart from the above (Training of Workers) it will covers at least :

- the roles and responsibilities of the various parties in the GSI companies in the field of health and safety;
- representing workers and their interests;
- communication skills.

12. To allow the workers' representatives to play an adequate and effective role their training needs to be appropriate for the tasks assigned to them. Sufficient provisions need to be made for the health and safety representatives to enable them to carry out tasks including at least preventative services and the consultation of workers for risk evaluation.

TRAINING OF MANAGEMENT STAFF

14. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF regard a high level of health and safety as being an integral part of the services provided by the companies in the GSI. Companies shall have competent personnel who can deal with health and safety matters. Occasions might arise for which the companies enlist competent external services or persons. The companies should, in the health and safety area consult as appropriate the employees and/or their representatives on the measures the external services or persons propose.

15. The training of managers, supervisors and health and safety advisers should as required :

- enable risks to be identified, then avoided and controlled;
- include an understanding of the role of the workers' safety-representative and the wider consultation mechanism in the company and assist in the integration of health and safety at every stage of the processes in the GSI, from inception through to completion and eventual demolition;
- lead to a high level of competence which includes expertise in :
 - on-site audits and inspection;
 - the assessment of hazards and the development of control measures for risk;
 - analysing management systems and the setting up of procedures for improved health and safety.

Their educational and training programme needs to take account of the depth and application of knowledge that such advisers, managers and supervisors require especially given the range of hazards that they may be asked to advise upon.

TRAINING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

16. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF acknowledge that a wide variety of methods and techniques are used in health and safety training in different companies in the European Union. They emphasise that exchange of experience between workers and management is essential for the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will achieve lasting awareness of health and safety at the work place.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF consider that this statement should contribute to achieving a higher level of health and safety in the Gas Supply Industry. They recommend that their members strive to ensure the highest level of health and safety of workers in all aspects of their work in the GSI. They regard training and education as an important and indispensable means to achieve and sustain a good health and safety performance. As part of the process of raising awareness of health and safety and training they recommend to their affiliates that :

- it is necessary to maximise the dissemination and exchange of information in the workplace;
- it is necessary to integrate communication and training on health and safety into vocational (including initial and continuous) training;
- workers and workers' representatives need to be informed and consulted on health and safety training for workers. They can make proposals and should be given appropriate health and safety education and training which is adapted to needs.

19. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF wish to promote the debate on health and safety issues in the GSI by encouraging exchange of information between those responsible for safety and health issues. In promoting this debate, it is noted that specific gas sector related issues will be addressed with priority over general workplace related health and safety aspects.

20. Eurogas and EPSU and EMCEF will monitor the follow-up to this statement and develop the recommendations to contribute to a higher level of health and safety in the Gas Supply Industry.

21. This health and safety statement has an updating procedure, to ensure that it retains its relevance and excellence. This process can be secured by:

- Making provision for an annual meeting to discuss particular health and safety developments in the industry (e.g. stress, risk of accidents)
- Conducting joint projects on health and safety in the industry
- Updating the document every two years by agreed approval of the respective executive bodies of each organisation

