

Occupational wellbeing study in the Finnish paper industry

The Finnish Forest Industries and the Finnish Paper Workers' Union have launched a joint study of the different factors of workplace wellbeing for paper industry employees. Occupational wellbeing is a central issue in an industry that is undergoing powerful regeneration after experiencing significant changes in recent years.

The aim of the occupational health study is to examine the current state of occupational wellbeing among paper industry workers as well as to identify its different constituent factors and the causes behind absences.

Another aim is to look for best practise operating models, which have improved workplace wellbeing and led to reductions in absence rates.

The two-year study is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009, but the intention is to immediately apply in practice the knowledge accumulated during its course.

Production facilities from eight locations around Finland have been selected as research subjects.

Absences need to be studied

Sickness absences and workplace accidents amounted to 7.5% of the regular working time of the Finnish paper industry employees in 2006.

This is equivalent to almost 18 working days per person. Annual leave and absences are counted into regular working time. The average industrial rate of absence was 6.7% in Finland in 2006.



Absences cause additional labour costs for employers and weaken profitability in tight competition.

From the employee's perspective, it is worthwhile to examine whether all possible measures have been taken to both aid recovery and improve the quality of life.

Interviews, case studies and workshops

Occupational wellbeing will be examined through personal interviews, case studies and in workshops.

The study is carried out in cooperation with local actors, such as occupational health care professionals.

In cooperation with the leading occupational wellbeing organizations

The Finnish Work Environment Fund has granted €150,000 to fund the two-year study.

The study itself which will be carried out by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), in addition to which the participating corporations will allocate personnel resources to assist researchers.

Strong expertise in the Steering Group

The steering group of the study, titled *Development of workplace wellbeing and management of sickness absences in the paper industry*, comprises researchers, employees and employers representatives:

- Chief Medical Officer **Jarmo Taipale** of Stora Enso (chairman)
- Docent **Anneli Leppänen** of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, who is in charge of the study
- Development manager **Tiina-Mari Monni** from the Centre for Occupational Safety
- Regional director **Irma Welling** of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.
- Managing director **Peter Rehnström** of the Finnish Work Environment Fund
- Researcher **Esa Kaitila** and industrial safety secretary **Hannu Ulenius** of the Paper Workers' Union,
- Chief shop steward **Ilkka Nokelainen** from Stora Enso
- Safety manager **Jari Haijanen** of M-Real/Metsä-Botnia
- Industrial safety councillor **Taisto Nieminen** of M-Real,
- Occupational health and safety development manager **Pauli Karjalainen** of UPM
- Health & safety director **Juha Mutru** of the Finnish Forest Industries Federation



Further information

For further information, please contact the following persons or the web sites of the organizations included in the project.

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