

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Health

Occupational Safety and Health Management Policy



Acknowledgments

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Foreword

Effective workplace health and safety programmes can save lives by reducing hazards and their possible consequences. They also have positive effects on both the morale and productivity of workers.

A successful occupational health and safety programme requires the collaboration and participation of both the Ministry of Health and employees in the programme. It involves the consideration of issues relating to occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, engineering safety, ergonomics and psychology.

Poor performance in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) can increase the cost of work-related illness, injury, and fatality. The changing workplace environment poses a major challenge to the management of OSH and requires that effective assessment and management of OSH issues are made a priority.

Despite increased knowledge and awareness about occupational hazards, every year new chemicals and technologies are introduced which present new and often unknown hazards to both workers and the community. These hazards present great challenges to all stakeholders involved in workers' health and the impact of hazardous agents on the environment.

Protecting the health and safety of all employees is central to the Ministry of Health achieving its mandate. Lines of responsibility for different health and safety issues must be explicitly stated and widely disseminated.

As part of its commitment to the health, safety and welfare of its employees, the Ministry developed this Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Management Policy to guide the implementation of an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS). Such a system will ensure that the Ministry:

- Has documented OHS goals and objectives
- Can establish, assess, and review its OHS procedures
- Can demonstrate its commitment to OHS to the regulatory agencies and other key stakeholders.

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Repealing Clause

This policy shall be known as the Ministry of Health Occupational Safety and Health Policy and hereafter referred to as the OSH Policy. This OSH Policy replaces any previous Occupational Safety and Health Policy within the Ministry of Health.

Effectivity Clause

This Occupational Safety and Health Policy becomes effective when approved and signed by the duly appointed officer(s) as follows:-

Signatories

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Specialist Medical Officer (Occupational Safety and Health)	Date
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Definition of Terms

Accident: An unplanned event that may result in illness, injury, damage to property or the environment.

Accident Investigation: The process of systematically gathering and analyzing information about an accident. For consistency of application, this is done for the purposes of identifying causes and making recommendations to prevent the accident from reoccurring.

Biohazard: Any organism or product of organisms that presents a risk to human health.

Employee: Any person who has entered into or works under a contract with an employer to do any skilled, unskilled, manual, clerical or other work for hire or reward, whether the contract is expressed or implied, oral or in writing or partly oral and partly in writing.

Executive Management: The team of individuals at the highest level of the organization who have the day-to-day responsibilities of managing the affairs of the Ministry of Health.

Exposure: The particular risk factor experienced by the worker, with specific modifying factors of intensity, frequency and duration.

Hazard: The potential to cause harm or an unwanted outcome. For example, asbestos is a hazard which can result in mesothelioma and working at heights is a hazard which can result in physical trauma from a fall.

Incident: An event, with known causal factors, which may lead to injury or illness.

Near Miss: Any event which had the potential to cause injury and/or damage and/or loss but which was avoided by circumstances.

Occupational Health: Occupational Health is the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations by preventing departures from health, controlling risks and the adaptation of work to people, and people to their jobs. (ILO / WHO 1950)

Occupational Safety and Health: Is a cross-disciplinary area concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment. The goal of all occupational safety and health programmes is to foster a safe work environment.

OSH Act: The Occupational Safety and Health Act No.1 of 2004 as amended and shall include all orders and regulations made under it.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Equipment worn or held by workers to protect themselves from exposure to hazardous materials or conditions. The major types of PPE include respirators, eye protection, ear protection, gloves, hard hats and protective suits.

Risk: The likelihood and consequences that exposure to a hazard will result in injury or disease

Risk Assessment: A risk assessment is a thorough look at a workplace to identify those things, situations, processes, etc that may cause harm, particularly to people.

1.0 Background

Since 1950, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have shared a common definition of Occupational Health. It was adopted by the Joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health at its first session in 1950 and revised at its twelfth session in 1994. The definition reads:

"Occupational Health should aim at: the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; the prevention amongst workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions; the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health; the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physiological and psychological capabilities; and, to summarize, the adaptation of work to man and of each man to his job."

The fundamental goal of all occupational safety and health programmes is to foster a safe work environment.

The Constitution of the WHO, the WHO Global Strategy on Health for All, plus the ILO Conventions on Occupational Safety and Health and on Occupational Health Services stipulate, among other issues, the fundamental right of each worker to the highest attainable standard of health. Workers have the right to know the potential hazards and risks in their work and workplace and they should, through appropriate mechanisms, participate in planning and decision-making concerning occupational health and other aspects of their own work, safety and health.

Workers should be empowered to improve working conditions by their own action. They should be provided with information necessary to effectively participate and respond to occupational health issues. Workers with individual susceptibilities, handicaps and other characteristics affecting their working capacity have a right to job adaptation that fits their particular situation.

Workplaces are the focal point for practical occupational health activities; therefore employers are responsible for planning and designing a safe and healthy work environment as well as for maintaining and constantly improving health and safety at work.

Workplace settings vary widely in size, sector, design, location, work processes, workplace culture, and resources. In addition, workers themselves are different in terms of age, gender, training, education, cultural background, health practices, and access to preventive health care. This translates to great diversity in the safety and health risks for each sector and the need for tailored interventions.

Despite the introduction of effective occupational health and safety interventions; existing and emerging physical, chemical, biological and psychosocial hazards still threaten the health of workers and continue to cause occupational and work-related diseases and injuries.

These realities made it necessary for the Ministry of Health to develop this OSH Management Policy aimed at protecting the health, safety and welfare of workers, visitors and users of its facilities and those of the Regional Health Authorities.

2.0 Introduction

Prior to 2006, Occupational Safety and Health in Trinidad and Tobago was governed by the Factories Ordinance, 1948, as amended in 1952. In 2004, the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act was assented to and was proclaimed in February 2006. The new OSH Act was developed primarily because the Factories Ordinance proved to be narrow in scope, outdated and inappropriate to deal with the expanding industrial sector. It was found that many occupations and workplaces fell far outside the ambit of the legal framework of the Factories Ordinance of 1948.

The new OSH Act provided for the revision and extension of the law regarding the safety, health and welfare of persons at work in order to keep up to speed with the country's rapid industrialization. It covers most workers with the exception of workers in private homes (domestic workers) and all aspects of work undertaken in an industrial establishment (defined as a factory, shop, office, place of work or other premises excluding residential premises) that may have significant impact on the health and safety of the employees.

The objective of the amendment was to strengthen the system of law which promotes voluntary compliance by facilitating stronger self-governance by the employer and workers and a more regulatory role by the government. It ensures that the promotion of high safety and health standards does not hinder business performance, productivity and efficiency in addition to addressing employee rights and issues such as sufficient protection and avenues for redress in accordance with the law and good industrial relations practices.

The main objective of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority Agency is compliance with the Act and related regulations. As such, increased public awareness, the sensitization of industrial partners and stakeholders close cooperation with other Ministries and institutions and the conduct of training are critical to the promotion of a preventive safety and health culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Agency is responsible for the implementation of the policies formulated by various authorities, initiating consultation with government entities performing various inspection functions with the objective of formulating memoranda of understanding, establishing mechanisms for co-ordination across jurisdictional lines and the implementation of integrated occupational safety and health programmes.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year an estimated 100 million workers are injured, 200,000 die each year in occupational accidents and 68 million to 157 million new cases of occupational disease are attributed to hazardous exposures in workplaces. Such high numbers of adverse health outcomes impact significantly on the health of the world's population. By affecting the health of the working population, occupational injuries and diseases have profound effects on work productivity and on the economic and social well-being of workers, their families and dependents.

The number of reported workplace accidents in Trinidad and Tobago for the years 2008 to 2011 and the associated number of fatalities are shown below in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Reported Work Related Accidents in Trinidad and Tobago

Fiscal Year (October to September)	No. of Reported Workplace Accidents	No. of which were fatalities
2010-2011	919	5
2009-2010	904	6
2008-2009	1114	15

(Source: Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Safety and Health Authority agency)

The level of occupational health and safety, the socioeconomic development of the country and the quality of life and well-being of working people are interrelated. Thus, occupational health is an important factor for sustainable socioeconomic development that enables workers to enjoy a healthy and productive life throughout their active working years and beyond.

3.0 Legislative Framework

This policy is guided by the Occupational Safety and Health Act Chapter 88:08, and other related Acts, Regulations, Policies and Codes of Practice listed in **Appendix 1**.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act was assented to on the 30th January 2004 and was published in the Trinidad and Tobago Gazette Volume 43 Number 20 on the 5th February 2004. The Factories Ordinance of 1948 was still law at that point in time. In 2006 several changes were made to the Act and it is referred to as the Occupational Safety and Health Act No.1 2004, as amended. The Note on Proclamation (LN48/2006) stated that the Act was brought into force on the 17thFebruary 2006 with the exception of Section 98 which stated that the following Laws are hereby repealed:

a. The Factories Ordinance;

- b. The Employment of Women (Night Work) Act, and
- c. The Gas Cylinders (Use, Conveyance and Storage) Act.

The Occupational Safety and Health Agency is the enforcing body with legal powers of access to every industrial establishment in order to undertake investigations and use their legal intervention powers, that is, the issuance of Improvement and Prohibition Notices and the commencement of prosecution procedures in the Industrial Court, or in specific cases, the Criminal Court. In August 2007 the Occupational Safety and Health Agency commenced its general operations placing emphasis in the areas of Oil and Gas, Ports, Chemical and Petrochemical Industry, General Manufacturing, Construction and Quarries, Agriculture and Public Services.

4.0 Policy Statement

The Ministry of Health is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all employees, visitors and clients from occupational or work related hazards and exposures.

Our commitment will be demonstrated by the following:

- 1. Effectively managing health and safety systems which meet the requirements of the OSH Act Chapter 88:08, and any other relevant legislation
- 2. Providing a safe and healthy working environment for all workers, patients and all persons utilizing the facilities of the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities premises
- 3. Providing safe equipment and machinery
- 4. Identifying, handling and controlling all health and safety hazards inclusive of biohazards
- 5. Ensuring that all employees are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties safely and effectively in the work environment
- 6. Consulting with employees of the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities on safety management and performance issues
- 7. Continuously striving to improve the Ministry of Health's and the Regional Health Authorities' health and safety performance.

5.0 Policy Objectives

The objectives of the policy are as follows:

- 5.1 To provide the framework for the development of an effective OSH Management System comprised of the following:
 - 5.1.1 Policy Development
 - 5.1.2 OSH Planning (Organising for safety)

- 5.1.3 OSH Implementation and Operation
- 5.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation
- 5.1.5 Management review and corrective action(s)
- 5.2 To minimize workers' risk of exposure to occupational health and safety hazards
- 5.3 To improve the working environment and safe systems of work
- 5.4 To promote a safety culture in support of health and safety at work by improving workers' knowledge, practice and attitude towards occupational health and safety.

6.0 Policy Scope

This policy is applicable to all assets under the purview of the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities as well as to all employees during the course of their duties, visitors, clients and service providers.

7.0 Policy Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Occupational Safety and Health Management Policy include the following:

- 1. Increased productivity at the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities as a result of a structured approach to OSH Management
- 2. Decreased accidents and incidents related to Occupational Safety and Health
- 3. Decreased absenteeism resulting from Occupational Safety and Health issues
- 4. Improved employee morale resulting from an improved working environment and safe systems of work
- 5. Increased level of compliance with the OSH Act and all other relevant legislation and codes of practice
- 6. Improved workplace health and safety culture
- 7. A reduction in the incidence of occupational diseases.

8.0 Key Performance Indicators

- 1. Decreased man hours lost due to occupational accidents and incidents
- 2. A reduction in the number of sick days utilised by employees
- 3. Decreased frequency of occupational accidents and incidents
- 4. Increased job satisfaction
- 5. Decreased number of citations and improvement notices
- 6. Increased number of persons trained in safe work practices
- 7. Reduced incidence of occupational disease.

9. 0 Policy Characteristics

(Adapted from the International Occupational Health and Safety Management System specification; OHSAS 18001)

9.1 Development and Implementation of an OSH Policy

- The Executive Management of the Ministry of Health shall authorise the development and implementation of the OSH Management Policy.
- The OSH Management Policy will be developed and implemented through a collaborative process involving key stakeholders
- The MoH will provide the necessary resources for the development and implementation of the OSH Management Policy
- The MoH will ensure that the OSH Management Policy is communicated to all key stakeholders
- The Ministry of Health will utilize an OSH Management System to define the characteristics of the OSH Management Policy
- The Ministry of Health shall define and document the scope of the OSH Management System

9.2 OSH Planning

To facilitate a robust OSH planning process, the Ministry will develop the following:

- Procedure(s) for ongoing hazard identification, risk assessment, and determination of necessary control measures
- Documented health and safety objectives for each relevant function and at each level within the organization
- Programmes for setting and achieving OSH objectives and targets
- Procedures or processes for reporting incidents, accidents and near misses
- Procedures to audit all health and safety processes and to make the necessary corrections
- Research programmes to keep abreast of the latest innovations in occupational health and safety.

9.3 OSH Implementation

Implementing an effective OSH Management system requires, among other things, clear assignment of roles and responsibility to key stakeholders and training programmes to provide employees with the tools to execute their responsibilities.

- The Executive Management of the Ministry of Health shall take ultimate responsibility for OSH and the implementation of the OSH Management System
- The management of the MoH must define a structure of the OSH Management System and provide resources to effectively implement health and safety programmes at the MoH

- Procedures must be developed by management and maintained to facilitate the implementation of the Ministry's health and safety policies and programmes
- Procedures must also be established and maintained to prevent and respond to accidents and emergency situations, and to prevent and mitigate the health and safety consequences that may be associated with them
- The Ministry shall appoint a member(s) of the Executive Management with specific responsibility for OSH.
- Training, education and skills needed for health and safety personnel must be identified and provided by the Ministry
- A communication plan must be developed to ensure pertinent OSH information is communicated to and from employees and other key stakeholders
- Procedures must be developed to maintain accurate and comprehensive health and safety records needed to feed into the OSH Management System. Information on the OSH Management Systems must be collected, collated and continuously analyzed (e.g. reports on accidents, incidents and near misses, compliance with standards and operation procedures etc.).

9.4 OSH Monitoring and Evaluation (Checking and Corrective actions)

The MoH's performance management system must incorporate both active and reactive monitoring to determine whether objectives are being achieved. Active monitoring should be used to check compliance with the organization's safety and health activities, for example to confirm that recently appointed staff have attended an induction course. Reactive monitoring should be used to investigate, analyze, and record safety and health management system failures, including accidents, near misses, and ill-health cases.

- The Ministry of Health shall develop implement and maintain procedures to monitor and measure OSH performance on a regular basis and to learn from safety and health management system failures, including hazardous events (accidents, near misses and illhealth cases)
- The occurrence of accidents, incidents and near misses can never be totally eliminated, therefore continuous monitoring and evaluation of the OSH Management System is required to provide feedback on areas of improvement or corrective action
- The Ministry must establish and maintain procedures both for handling and investigating accidents, incidents and non-conformances and for initiating corrective and preventive action
- The MoH must ensure that risk-control measures have been implemented and are effective. The MoH must also promote better implementation of plans and risk controls by providing feedback to all parties
- The Ministry will establish and maintain a programme and procedures for periodic audit of the OSH Management System to determine whether safety and health policies and plans have been implemented and achieved.

9.5 OSH Management Review

The Executive Management of the Ministry of Health shall periodically review the OSH Management System at pre-determined intervals and as needed, to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. Reviews shall include assessing opportunities for improvement and the need for changes to the OSH Management System following an accident or incident.

10.0 Roles and Responsibilities

10.1 The Ministry of Health is responsible for:

- 1. The overall management of Occupational Safety and Health in the Public Health Sector
- 2. Conducting comprehensive workplace risk assessments to manage risks and hazards annually and as necessary, without prejudice to Section 13A of the OSH Act, and review these risk assessments on a regular basis.
- 3. Conducting health surveillance as appropriate, having regard to the risk of employees' safety and health which are identified by risk assessments.
- 4. Conducting medical examinations and provide treatment and /or appropriate corrective measures as necessary on workers who work with hazardous materials including those exposed to ionizing radiation, noise and vibration.
- 5. Communicating the OSH management policy and any amendments of the policy to all employees.
- 6. Developing and improving programmes and procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations of the OSH Act.
- 7. Ensuring that appropriate engineering and administrative controls are in place, and that personnel are properly trained and provided with appropriate safety and emergency equipment, including PPE where applicable.
- 8. Encouraging a culture of workplace safety and health, including personal accountability and emphasizing compliance with standards and conformance with departmental policies and best practices during employees' training and in performance reviews.
- 9. Developing and implementing systems to encourage employees to adopt this policy into practice and report any safety or health concerns to management.
- 10. Developing security systems for each workplace of the Ministry to ensure the safety of all employees.
- 11. Ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that workplace violence is mitigated.
- 12. Strengthening stakeholder collaborations for the development and implementation of Occupational Safety and Health Systems.
- 13. Ensuring the provision of adequate resources to meet safety and health requirements.
- 14. Ensuring that this policy is implemented in the Ministry and all Regional Health Authorities.
- 15. Integrating and including OSH principles in the overall planning and decision making process.

- 16. Ensuring the establishment, maintenance and improvement of safety and health systems in all facilities.
- 17. Ensuring where appropriate, responsibilities for safety and health are detailed in job descriptions.
- 18. Promoting inter-sectoral collaboration with key stakeholders including the private sector, local offices of PAHO and the International Labour Organization in the implementation of Occupational Safety and Health.
- 19. Establishing a memorandum of understanding with the Occupational Safety and Health Authority Agency and the Division of Health and Social Services Tobago House of Assembly; to ensure there is collaboration regarding OSH issues and diseases.
- 20. Advocating for the inclusion of Occupational Safety and Health education in the Health Curricula of Training Institutions.
- 21. Developing Public Awareness and Educational Programmes in Occupational Health.
- 22. Facilitating a review of the policy at least once every two years or as necessary.

10.2 Chief Medical Officer

The Chief Medical Officer is responsible for:

- 1. Ensuring compliance with the OSH legislation and the Ministry of Health OSH Management Policy.
- 2. Advising the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to designate and appoint a Medical Officer as Medical Inspector.
- 3. Strengthening mechanisms for prevention, control and management of occupational diseases and medical surveillance.
- 4. Increasing access to preventive, control, treatment and rehabilitation services for occupational diseases.
- 5. Assessing the status of occupational diseases in Trinidad and Tobago.
- 6. Establishing strong collaboration between Infection Control Committees, Occupational Safety and Health Committees and Disaster Preparedness Committees in the Health Sector.
- 7. Ensuring prevention and control of occupational diseases through regular vaccination and other preventive programmes.
- 8. Ensuring the establishment of rehabilitation programmes for injured workers.
- 9. Ensuring that monitoring and evaluation of the Occupational Safety and Health programmes are conducted regularly.
- 10. Ensuring the inclusion of safety and health performance standards for all contractors engaged by the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities

10.3 The Specialist Medical Officer (Occupational Health), Ministry of Health

The Specialist Medical Officer (Occupational Health), Ministry of Health shall:

1. Advise the Executive Management of the Ministry of Health on health and safety matters to ensure that the highest standard of Occupational Health and Safety of workers are achieved and maintained.

10.4 The Regional Health Authorities

The Regional Health Authorities are responsible for:

- 1. Integrating and including OSH principles in their overall planning and decision making process.
- 2. Ensuring the establishment, maintenance and improvement of safety and health systems in all facilities.
- 3. Ensuring, where appropriate, responsibilities for safety and health are detailed in job descriptions.
- 4. Ensuring that all accidents/incidents and near misses are investigated, recorded and reported and that remedial action is taken to prevent re-occurrences.
- 5. Liaising, where appropriate, with the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro-Enterprises Development, Environmental Management Agency, Local Authorities, and the Ministry of National Security and other advisory sources on matters of Health and Safety.
- 6. Promoting information, education and communication on Occupational Safety and Health throughout their respective regions.
- 7. Allocating adequate resources to create/promote a safety and health culture through the use of the appropriate systems, work practices and technologies.
- 8. Planning, developing and implementing systems to ensure that consultations occur on OSH issues with employees and their representatives.

10.5 Occupational Health Physicians (RHAs)

The Occupational Health Physicians (RHAs) are responsible for:

- 1. Conducting health assessments to determine an individual's fitness to perform assigned duties and to ensure that work will not adversely affect the health of the employee, his/her colleagues or the general public.
- 2. Providing advice on fitness for specific jobs, ill health, retirement, health surveillance programmes and the rehabilitation of individuals after sickness or injury
- 3. Facilitating the maintenance of the highest degree of physical and mental health of employees through advice and health promotion initiatives.

11.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

- 1. Monitoring and evaluation of current Occupational, Safety and Health standards and procedures will be routinely conducted to determine their effectiveness and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.
- 2. A reporting system for OSH should be established to facilitate the development of a database which will provide statistical information for effective monitoring, evaluation and evidenced-based decision making.

12.0 Conclusion

Through the Occupational Safety and Health Management Policy, the Ministry of Health is committed to the protection of persons from occupational or work related hazards and exposures. This policy seeks to provide the framework for the implementation of a robust OSH Management System to ensure a safe working environment for all employees as well as to inculcate a culture of safety within the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities.

13.0 References

- 1. OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management System Requirements (2007)
- 2. Joint WHO-ILO-UNAIDS Policy Guidelines on Improving Health Worker Access to HIV and TB Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support services (2010)
- 3. Joint ILO/WHO Guidelines on health services and HIV/AIDS (2005)
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- 5. Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations (1999)
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- 10. BS 8800: 2004 Guide to occupational health and safety management systems, British Standards Institution, London.
- Occupational health and safety management systems Specification, OHSAS 18001:1999 and Guidelines for the implementation of OHSAS 18001, OHSAS 18002:2000, National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)
- 12. Systems in Focus guidance on occupational safety and health management systems, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, UK, 2003

APPENDIX I

Related Policies/Standards/Guidelines/Protocols includes inter-alia:

- 1. Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2004 (as amended)
- 2. Accreditation Standards Manual for the Health Sector
- 3. The Tobacco Control Act 2009
- 4. Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Policy
- 5. Code of Practice, Biomedical Waste Management
- 6. Mental Health Act
- 7. Environmental Management Act
- 8. Patient Care Risk Reduction Protocol
- 9. Public Health Ordinance, Chapter 12 No. 4
- 10. Municipal Corporation Act 1990
- 11. Infection Control Policy
- 12. Disaster Preparedness Policy
- 13. Workplace Mental Health Policy
- 14. Radiation Protection Policy
- 15. Immunization Policy for Health Care Professionals