

# Who is who in occupational safety and health

## People in occupational safety and health

An information leaflet provided as part of the Austrian occupational safety and health strategy

### Occupational safety and health in small businesses – Who does what?

Occupational safety and health is an important issue not only in large companies but also in small and very small businesses, and specific persons need to be responsible for it. Specialists are responsible for safety and health protection and work to ensure it. This folder provides you with a general overview of who is who in occupational safety and health and what is their role.

#### Employers

Employers are obliged to ensure the safety and health of employees and to improve working conditions on an ongoing basis. The main task of employers is to carry out and document risk assessment (workplace evaluation). If employers are not able to be present sufficiently often themselves, a suitable person has to be appointed who will ensure the implementation of and adherence to the necessary protection measures on the premises.

#### Employees

Employees have to make a contribution towards the realisation of occupational safety and health for themselves and others in the company. They have to follow the instructions and training of employers and act in such a way that dangers to themselves and others can be avoided. Accidents and dangerous situations (near accidents) have to be reported to their superiors.

#### The Labour Inspectorate

Alongside the monitoring of adherence to legal provisions on occupational safety and health, the Labour Inspectorate also has an advisory role in this field. There are individual Agriculture and Forestry Inspectorates in the respective provinces. You can obtain further information from the websites of the Labour Inspectorates at [www.arbeitsinspektion.gv.at](http://www.arbeitsinspektion.gv.at).

#### Occupational physicians

Employers have to appoint occupational physicians. Occupational physicians advise employers, employees, safety representatives and employees' organisations on all issues in the field of the protection of health and health promotion in the workplace as well as designing work as humanly as possible. They support employers in the fulfilment of their obligations in these areas. The tasks, obligations and minimum presence levels of occupational physicians are regulated by the Health and Safety at Work Act.

## Supervisor

Each employer must appoint a suitable supervisor on building sites. If the supervisor is not constantly present, a suitable stand-in has to be appointed.

## AUVA (Austrian workers compensation board)

The AUVA is the main statutory accident insurance provider for around 5 million insured. Alongside the treatment of accident victims, rehabilitation and pension payments, one of the main tasks of the AUVA is the prevention of work accidents and occupational illnesses. In addition, the AUVA offers free support for small companies with up to 50 employees via its Prevention Centres (known as AUVAsicher). For further information please see [www.auva.at](http://www.auva.at).

## Building site coordinator

The building site coordinator has the task of coordinating the safe cooperation of the workers of different employers on building sites. The Construction Work Coordination Act defines the role of the building site coordinator as well as that of the planning coordinator, who draws up the safety and health protection plan for the site in the planning phase.

## On-site visits (by a safety expert and an occupational physician)

In workplaces with 11 – 50 employees, support from a safety expert and an occupational physician must take the form of an annual onsite visit. In workplaces with 1 – 10 employees the onsite visit has to be tri-annual for offices or similar premises, and bi-annual for all other workplaces. If, in the case of several workplaces, there is a total of not more than 250 employees (i.e. in all workplaces), the services of the prevention centres of the AUVA or the VAEB can be used.

## Works council

Monitors the implementation of and adherence to the regulations on occupational safety and health and is obliged to point out shortcomings to the employers and to hold consultations with them about their resolution. Works council members have extensive information and participation rights. The works council has to accompany inspections by the Labour Inspectorate. A works council can be established from 5 employees onwards.

## Fire fighting and evacuation

In workplaces which have no fire protection officer, no assistant fire protection officer, no fire protection group or company fire service, persons must be appointed who are responsible for fire fighting and the evacuation of employees.

## Fire protection officers

The appointment of fire protection officers is prescribed by the authorities if they consider it necessary. Fire protection officers have to complete a training course of at least 16 hours according to the guidelines of the fire service associations or fire prevention agencies.

## Assistant fire protection officers

The appointment of assistant fire protection officers is prescribed by the authorities if they consider it necessary. Assistant fire protection officers support the latter in their work. They must attend a company-related training and instruction course of at least six hours, which can also be carried out by fire protection officers.

## First aiders

The number of first aiders depends on the number of employees, whereby a differentiation is made between "normal" workplaces and workplaces with low accident risk (offices or similar premises).

Number of employees in company	1 – 19	20 – 29	30 – 39	+ 10
Number of employees in an office or similar premises	1 – 29	30 – 49	50 – 69	+ 20
Number of first aiders	1	2	3	+ 1

Training for first aiders is either eight hours (1 – 4 employees who are regularly present at the same time) or 16 hours (five or more employees) depending on the size of the company. A refresher course must be completed every four years as a minimum.

## Specialist knowledge

According to the Regulation on the Provision of Evidence of Specialist Knowledge, certain jobs may only be carried out by workers who can provide proof of the required specialist skills. This applies, for example, to operating certain cranes or driving forklift trucks.

## Interest groups – Economic chamber (WKO) and Chamber of Labour (AK)

The WKO as the interest group of employers and the AK as the interest group of employees provide advice and support in relation to occupational safety and health. For further information please see [www.wko.at](http://www.wko.at), [www.arbeiterkammer.at](http://www.arbeiterkammer.at) and [www.svp.at](http://www.svp.at).

## Preventive hours (of safety experts and occupational physicians)

In workplaces with more than 50 employees, the annual number of preventive hours depends on the number of employees and the risk potential, and has to amount to at least 1.2 or 1.5. hours per employee and year (+ 0.5 hours in the case of night work). For workplaces with up to 50 employees: see the term "On-site visits".

## Prevention centres (operated by the AUVA and the VAEB)

Workplaces with up to 50 employees can appoint their own or external experts, or can take advantage of the services of preventive specialists (i.e. safety experts and occupational physicians) offered free of charge by a prevention centre of the AUVA or VAEB (as long as not more than a total of 250 persons are employed in all workplaces of the company).

These regional centres offer – at the request of employers – free safety and occupational health support on the basis of on-site visits. The staff of the prevention centres solely have an advisory function in the evaluation of work places. The prevention centres of the AUVA (AUVAsicher) can be contacted via the website [www.auva.at](http://www.auva.at), and the VAEB centre via [www.vaeb.at](http://www.vaeb.at).

## Preventive services and preventive specialists

The employees of every workplace have to be provided with safety support by preventive specialists. Preventive specialists have to be consulted on all health and safety issues. Preventive specialists can be safety experts, occupational physicians or other specialists if required. The frequency and duration of the work of preventive specialists is determined on the basis of the preventive hours or (in companies with up to 50 employees) on-site visits. Preventive specialists have to be involved in the assessment of work places.

## Safety experts

Safety experts advise employers, employees, safety representatives and employees' organisations on all issues in the field of safety in the workplace as well as on designing work as humanly as possible. Specialist training to become a safety expert involves a course of 288 units which is offered by the AUVA, the Institutes for Economic Promotion (WIFI), the BFI adult education centre, or the TÜV technical safety institute.

Note: Safety Experts in Austria are called "Sicherheitsfachkräfte" (SFK)

**Austrian occupational safety and health strategy 2007-2012 Working group:** The awareness of danger and risk assessment (evaluation) This brochure does not claim to be exhaustive

A cooperation between:

AUVA – WKO – AK – ÖGB – OÄK – VAI – VÖSI – TÜV – WKO-Baunebengewerbe – oesterreichs energie

## Safety representatives (SR)

A safety representative is a workers' representative with a special function in occupational safety and health, and should not be confused with the safety expert. The safety representative has extensive rights to information and has to be involved in many issues related to occupational safety and health. Safety representatives have to be appointed with the approval of the employees' representatives and registered with the Labour Inspectorate. The specialist training to become a safety representative involves a course of 24 units which is offered, for example, by the AUVA, the Chamber of Labour (AK), the Institutes for Economic Promotion (WIFI), the BFI adult education centre, or the TÜV technical safety institute.

From 11 employees = 1 safety representative (SR)	from 51 employees = 2 SR	from 101 employees = 3 SR
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Note: Safety Representatives in Austria are called "Sicherheitsvertrauenspersonen" (SVP)

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