

Position of the German Social Accident Insurance on prevention

Prevention pays off: fatal and severe occupational, school and commuting accidents have fallen in number by around two thirds over the last two decades. Numerous occupational diseases are prevented by the careful selection of prevention activities in companies and proactive early support for individuals. Despite these measures, individuals covered by the German Social Accident Insurance still suffer severe accidents resulting in lifelong impairments, the best curative treatment and rehabilitation notwithstanding. Fatal accidents also still occur every year. Road accidents are a particular blackspot. In addition, each year sees once again the suspicion of an occupational disease confirmed in many insured individuals. Numerous working hours continue to be lost due to diseases in which work-related health hazards may be a factor. These include diseases of the musculoskeletal system and mental disorders. This all has major consequences for individual businesses and the economy as a whole.

The world of work and education is changing both rapidly and profoundly. Digitalization and other technical innovations are leading to new forms of work, combined with growing flexibilization, both of forms of employment, and of the timing and location of work.

Further factors with a lasting influence upon the development of our society are international competition, migration, cultural diversity and demographic change.

Against this backdrop, companies and educational institutions must adapt in order to make safety and health at work inherent to their activity, and for a culture of prevention to emerge. Work and education must therefore be structured such that:

- People are able to learn and work safely and in good health.
- Emerging risks to safety and health are identified at an early stage, in order for measures be taken to prevent the hazards associated with these risks.
- Safe, healthy and inclusive working and learning conditions are created, in order for employability, performance and learning ability to be retained.

We, the German Social Accident Insurance Institutions for the private and public sectors, have the mandate to use all suitable means to prevent occupational, school and commuting accidents, occupational diseases and work-related health hazards. These include needs-oriented elements of workplace health promotion that contribute to the avoidance of occupational diseases or the reduction of work-related health hazards and thus to the retention of good health. Our unique selling proposition is our proven sectoral competence. The guarantee of this competence is our administrative structure, in which employers' and employees' representatives hold joint and equal responsibility. We take participation by people with disabilities as a given.

How do we help to safeguard safety and health?

- 1. With the Vision Zero, we pursue the objective of a world without occupational accidents, occupational diseases or work-related health hazards. Its highest priority is to prevent fatal and serious work accidents and occupational diseases. Safety and health are integrated at all levels of decision-making and action through a culture of prevention.**

We gear our prevention services to the Vision Zero and focus our efforts upon particularly frequent accidents, occupational diseases and work-related health hazards. Continual observation, for example by means of the risk observatory of the German Social Accident Insurance, helps us to identify new developments and risks in the world of work and education as they emerge. In turn, we can then offer solutions before these risks take effect. We are continually improving our contribution to establishing a healthy culture of prevention in the issues of leadership, communication, participation, error culture, social climate, and the integration of safety and health. Through our “komm**mit**mensch” prevention campaign, we are

introducing the culture of prevention across a broad front into companies, educational institutions and society as a whole.

2. We provide advice and support, monitor the observance of statutory provisions governing safety and health, and enforce the necessary prevention measures as part of our monitoring mandate.

Active participation in the statutory accident insurance system by employers and insured individuals ensures sector-specific services and local proximity to companies and educational institutions. We advise and support the parties responsible for conducting risk assessments and selecting and implementing prevention measures suitable for use in practice in the specific businesses and institutions concerned. We attach particular importance in this context to prevention measures being holistic, i.e. to consideration being given to all hazard factors and their mutual influences. In addition, we facilitate access to quality-assured support by occupational physicians and OSH professionals.

3. By providing a cohesive body of rules and regulations, we equip the individuals responsible in companies and educational institutions to take the action required.

We are active on committees responsible for state occupational safety and health legislation, where we work in the interests of sector-specific concerns and observations being given appropriate consideration in the body of state rules and regulations. The rules and regulations drawn up in the DGUV's expert committees supplement statutory legislation by describing sector-specific solutions by which the statutory requirements can be met. The sectoral rules have a key function in this respect.

4. We promote safety and health by delivering prevention, rehabilitation and compensation services and benefits with respect to occupational and commuting accidents and occupational diseases.

From a single source: our activities involve a close synergy of prevention, rehabilitation and compensation. We are consequently able to identify needs and opportunities for action more swiftly, and to enhance cooperation. We exploit data gained from rehabilitation activity for the development and management of our prevention services. We also promote prevention activity at individual level, since prevention measures for specific individuals benefit workplace prevention activity for all insured persons.

5. Our purposeful training measures help to make work safer and healthier.

Safety and health requires trained personnel. Our training measures reinforce safe and health-oriented leadership and action in companies and educational institutions. Recognized standards and continual further development assure the quality of the training we offer and its topical relevance in detail.

6. We promote the acquisition by children, teenagers and young adults of the health and safety skills that they will need for their adult lives.

We seek to establish safety and health as an integral part of pre-school and school education and to promote implementable concepts of good, healthy educational institutions. To this end, we cooperate closely with the German Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the federal and regional ministries responsible for education, and further partners. Safety and health should be an integral part of the curricula in all forms of basic, further and advanced vocational training. Our focus here lies in particular upon vocational and technical colleges, universities and bodies involved in vocational further training.

7. Together with Germany's federal and regional authorities and the social partners, we promote and advance the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy. In the areas of prevention and health promotion, we promote cooperation with other social insurance agencies, and with all relevant institutions, particularly in the context of Germany's national prevention strategy.

We serve as a point of contact for companies and educational institutions in all issues of safety and health. At the same time, we act as a guide for networking between all providers of social services and social insurance involved in a company or educational institution. To this end, we promote and develop prevention concepts compatible with the functions of other bodies delivering social services. In our solutions for the organization of safety and health, we consider not only tasks relating to occupational safety and health, but also issues of health promotion, corporate integration management and inclusion, in order for these aspects to be integrated and combined systematically.

8. We ensure the continual and ongoing development of our prevention services through in-house research, funding of third-party research and evaluation.

In order continually to improve our prevention services, we require well-grounded research findings concerning issues relating to our prevention activity. We therefore enhance our research activities by developing the institutes of the DGUV and cooperating with external research institutes. We also analyse stresses and exposures in companies and educational institutions, and in the process build up a body of data from which observations and measures for safety and health can be derived. We attach particular importance to research-based further development and possible new development of needs-oriented prevention services, and evaluate the efficacy of these services.

9. In the interests of our insured individuals and member companies, we participate actively at national, European and international level in the development of prevention activities and training.

We promote joint activities at international level with the goal of establishing a high standard of safety and health worldwide. In the process, we contribute to making the world of work more humane, and competition fairer. The support of the International Social Security Association is important in this context. We share our experience and observations with others and learn in turn from them, for example in research and from examples of good practice. We support national, European and international standardization activity in order to submit safety and health concerns. We are also involved in the sphere of testing and certification. For example, we raise safety and health issues at an early stage during the development of new technologies and processes, and set standards.

10. We rise to the challenges of digitalization, and support companies, educational institutions and insured individuals through the process of transition.

Digital change is transforming the world of work and education as we know it, for example by its impact upon corporate structures, the organization of work, and training. We analyse the new forms of employment developing under the umbrella of digital change against the criteria that must be met in order for workplaces and learning environments to be safe and healthy. We will meet the particular challenges to prevention posed by these new forms of employment with modern services. The prevention services must react flexibly to the particular requirements of the new forms of work by developing their own strategies further and adapting their structures and procedures appropriately. Through the astute selection of personnel and training measures, we ensure high levels of professionalism and the further development of our own personnel in the face of the changing requirements. This concerns, for example, modes of communication, forms of training, and further development of the prevention services. We thereby contribute to activity continuing to be safe and healthy in a changing world of work and education.

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