



COSAT is a nationally recognised occupational health services provider with headquarters in Lisbon and several regional branches throughout the country. It employs 48 people. COSAT works in conjunction with PAGE, a group of companies with expertise in management, human resources, communication and multimedia.

Meeting objectives

The company provides OHS advice and services to approximately 300 companies (most of which are SMEs), in the industrial, commerce and services sectors, looking after approximately 8000 workers.

Specific objectives are:

- n To advise businesses on work conditions, health and risk assessment and to pinpoint specific needs so that Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programmes can be developed
- n To improve employee health by implementing a health strategy that focuses on preventive measures
- n To encourage the active participation of management and workers
- n To offer scientific and technical advice to employers on improving work organisation and to redesign and reorganise workplaces to make them safer and healthier
- n To ensure that legal requirements on OHS are met.

Providing an exemplary service

COSAT has excellent and wide-ranging facilities and a broad range of expertise. Personnel include occupational health doctors, nurses and other health experts such as psychologists, occupational safety and hygiene specialists, nutritionists and multimedia experts.

Implementing workplace health promotion

Workplace Health Promotion is one of COSAT's main concerns. OHS and WHP quality management is based on data collection, analysis and evaluation, so that better programmes, practices and procedures can be put together.

COSAT recognises that successful WHP requires certain preconditions:

- n support from the owner/manager. Without this back-up, it is impossible to motivate employees.
- n the creation of WHP programmes specific to individual organisations that should also provide a framework for the introduction of health circles and promote the general principle of participation.



Eight SMEs are receiving WHP services from COSAT. Most of these firms have initiated specific WHP activities in areas such as nutrition, alcoholism, smoking and exercise. 430 workers are currently involved, but there are plans to greatly increase these numbers.

A positive response

With COSAT's help, many companies are improving communication channels and opportunities for staff participation. Co-operation between management and workers has improved a great deal. A significant number of firms are introducing health circles too.

Data collected by the occupational health doctors has helped to identify the main problem areas that need to be analysed in the health circles. The areas most commonly identified as needing addressing include muscular-skeletal problems, ergonomic improvements and better health and safety. Other proposals relate to changing behaviour and encouraging a healthy lifestyle e.g. nutrition and exercise programmes, stop smoking and alcohol campaigns. These measures were, generally speaking, well received.

Three case studies

■ Jorge Honório da Silva & Filho, Lda, employs 152 workers and pro-

duces refrigerated containers. The company invested 381.000 in a short term 'Risk Control Programme'. This programme looked at the quality of the working environment, OHS and ergonomics and provided a good basis for the introduction of WHP. The company has looked at a number of lifestyle issues with a view to improving staff health via better nutrition, exercise and reduced consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

■ AL – Fábrica de Material Eléctrico, S.A. employs 154 workers and manufactures components for use in electricity, water and gas circuits, as well as equipment for lighting and telecommunications.

AL won the "Excellence" award for SMEs three years running and early in 2000 it gained the NP EN ISO 9002 standard. A new industrial unit was built creating better working conditions for all staff. Work organisation, muscular problems and exposure to dust have also been looked at. Within the scope of workplace health promotion, the company has developed a programme for improving lifestyle and behaviour that will focus on diet, exercise, and control of alcohol and smoking.

■ Pórtico Rochas Decorativas, Lda. employs 15 people and manufactures products made of marble and other types of stone for building and decorative purposes.

The company is working towards the NP EN ISO 9002 certificate.

Management policy focuses on productivity by improving work conditions, assessing and preventing risks, health checks and workplace health promotion. The company encourages staff to enjoy a healthier lifestyle by eating properly, taking regular exercise and cutting out smoking and reducing alcohol consumption.

Following their work with COSAT, these three companies have entered a national competition on safe work.

Other achievements

COSAT has carried out a great deal of work on preventing muscular-skeletal problems. This work has been compiled in an accessible format for use by client companies. One of COSAT's studies was recently presented as an example of good practice during Europe Week 2000, organised by the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work.

Because of its project on ergonomics and muscular-skeletal problems COSAT was given a European Good Practice Award in Health and Safety at Work.