

ISTAS is an autonomous technical foundation supported by 'Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras' (Trade Union Confederation CCOO – one of the main Spanish trades unions). Its main objectives are to develop social interventions for improving working conditions, the working environment and workers' health.

Making progress

ISTAS has developed a number of intervention programmes designed to provide information for professionals involved in occupational health and safety and to broaden the debate on health related issues.

Measures taken include:

n *Providing information*

An information and documentation service was set up for answering queries relating to occupational health and the working environment (including technical problems, legal advice, trade union problems/queries).

n *Training*

Training programmes were devised expressly for the purpose of improving the skills of workers' representatives, particularly OHS delegates.

n *OHS Assessment*

A decentralised network of trade union bureaux was co-ordinated for assessing OHS workers' delegates and health and safety committees.

n *Research*

Systematic research methods were developed to identify links between

work, the working environment and health.

n *Dissemination of information*

A number of highly informative publications have been put together and a forum created for increased social debate on occupational health and the working environment.

An award-winning publication for professionals

'Por experiencia' is a quarterly publication distributed free to around 32.000 OHS delegates and about 8.000 people involved in the preventive services and in scientific and academic fields. Its main purpose is to disseminate useful information about health promotion and preventive practices in order to improve the intervention skills of OHS workers' delegates. It aims to do this in an accessible and interesting manner.

'Por experiencia' is also available online (<http://www.ccoo.es/istas/pe>). The electronic version is easy to access and the various sections are simple to navigate through. The interactive options and animated information packages are presented in a very attractive, lively and



engaging way. This website recently received the double U quality certification which is given to webs which fulfil strict criteria relating to content, design, professionalism, originality and practicality.

The publication is divided into six sections:

n *Notice board*

with brief news pieces and announcements.

n *Working conditions*

containing articles on a broad spectrum of issues that impact on health, musculoskeletal diseases, for example, risk of job loss, the dangers of asbestos etc.

n *Dossier*

This section looks at contemporary health and safety topics such as the risks of working with pesticides, temporary work agencies, and other current occupational diseases and occupational injuries.

n *Opinion/interview*

Interviews or opinion pieces with relevant experts in the field of OHS and from a variety of other disciplines too (scientific, social etc)

n *Trade union activities*

contributions from those with practical experience in the field.

n *Bulletin board*

designed to create a link between delegates by providing a forum for the exchange of information and publication of letters.

Reaching out to health professionals

'Por experiencia' is aimed mainly at OHS workers' delegates but is also written with all OHS professionals in mind and indeed anyone with an interest in occupational health and safety.

Efforts are being made to bring SMEs on board where health issues are concerned. Improving health in SMEs is mentioned as a specific aim along with improving the health and safety situation in high risk sectors. So that SMEs can be targeted specifically, criteria for collective bargaining during 2001 include the need to incorporate sectoral Health and Safety Joint Committees which include an OHS delegate. This point is also reinforced by the government by provision of finance for health and preventive interventions.

It's clear from a number of studies that the more training hours and the more information delegates have, the more proactive they become in terms of participating and engaging in health matters. 'Por experiencia' contributes to this by raising awareness on health issues and by providing continuous information on practical solutions to problems and on new trends in health matters.

Future objectives

Specific aims for 2001 include:

- n** Improving the distribution of the journal and increasing its circulation to 75.000 copies.
- n** Contributing to the enforcement of OHS legislation by providing information about working conditions in SMEs and the consequences of failing to fulfil legal obligations.
- n** Improving OHS delegates' understanding of how SMEs operate and the specific problems facing small companies.
- n** External evaluation of the journal using indicators such as number of people reached, reader satisfaction and expert opinions about its structure, content, usefulness and impact on working conditions.