

# Reykjavík Graveyards

## Iceland



*Kirkjugardar Reykjavíkur (Reykjavík Graveyards) is a service enterprise, employing a permanent staff of 27 (22 men and 5 women), most of whom work full-time. Although half the staff are specialists in their field, extra training is still provided. The enterprise is publicly owned and controls half the Icelandic market. The company uses the services of a private healthcare provider.*

### **About the company**

The company became interested in workplace health promotion during the summer months. Maximum staffing levels are required over this period, but absenteeism was high. As the company believes that investing in a good working environment is amply repaid by the benefits of a happy, stable workforce, it decided to address this problem by hiring a private healthcare company.

In a specialist operation such as this, it is very important to keep employee turnover to a minimum, so a great deal of money has been spent on improving working conditions and work procedures, in order to encourage staff to stay with the company. A bonus system was introduced during the summer season as a further incentive.

To help the staff feel included in the decision making process and to give them a chance to voice their opinions and share any grievances, informal lunch meetings are set up from time to time. The main points from the previous meeting are also discussed to ensure that the measures agreed upon have been implemented. Staff lose confidence

when improvement proposals are not put into practice.

Staff are also encouraged to improve their skills and the company pays for courses, whether or not they are directly related to the graveyard business.

### **Maintaining good morale**

The company makes an effort to listen to employees and to take their needs into consideration. Communication is essential if a good relationship is to be built up between employees and management. An effort is made to provide pleasurable experiences for the staff. For example, there is an annual barbecue during the summer, work stops at noon and the afternoon is spent playing games. The works council also organises an annual staff trip.

### **Health and safety at the workplace**

All the supervisors have been sent on a health and safety course organised by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. It is made clear to staff from the outset that they are responsible for



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the tools and equipment they work with. The company also employs a safety manager and employees are actively encouraged to use safety equipment.

Smoking is not permitted in the workplace. Financial support is provided by the company for physical exercise programmes. It also subsidises physiotherapy and rehabilitation programmes and employees have access to counselling.

Money invested in healthcare is considered to be money well spent as a healthy, happy employee gives a better service and is more efficient. Once the company improved healthcare, illness decreased and the employees' attitudes to work improved and they became more positive and satisfied. The enterprise has not assessed the situation fully, but sickness related absenteeism has dropped, to a certain extent at least.

#### ***Employees' access to healthcare and safety services***

The enterprise has a healthcare contract with a private company that effectively meets employees' needs. Psychological provision is taken into consideration within this, and counsellors are on hand so that employees can discuss health or personal problems.

The enterprise works in close co-operation with the Occupational

Health and Safety Administration and their representatives check conditions, machinery and safety equipment regularly. There is no specific quality certifying system, but machinery is reviewed annually.

#### ***Special welfare projects***

- n Additional counselling services are provided for employees needing extra help and access to a psychologist is also provided.
- n The company employs a disabled worker.
- n Former employees are invited to the company for an annual visit.

#### ***Employee satisfaction***

Generally speaking the employees are very satisfied with their work and staff turn-over is low. Staff are also happy with the health promotion project and absenteeism has fallen. The bonus system has also contributed to reduced absenteeism.

#### ***Plans for the future***

Health promotion has been adopted on a permanent basis and efforts will be made to build on what has already been achieved. The results of work carried out so far have been extremely positive. Employees have responded well and are accepting greater responsibility for their own health.

#### ***A good image***

This organisation believes that by caring for its staff it has enhanced its public image.

#### ***Tips for other enterprises?***

- n Give greater consideration to employees' needs
- n Improve internal communication channels
- n Build confidence between employees and management through staff meetings. Management must listen to employees' arguments and ideas before finalising decisions on new investments.