

# Social partners in the motor vehicle and two-wheeler branch

Netherlands



*The Bedrijfsraad (“company council”) for the motor industry is the consultative body and communication platform of employers’ organisations “BOVAG” and “NCBRM” and the unions “FNV Bondgenoten”, “CNV Bedrijvenbond” and “De Unie”. This consultative body oversees working conditions, safety and well-being at work for 12.000 employers and 84.000 employees in car and truck dealerships, petrol stations, car wash companies, car rental companies, caravan and trailer companies, salvage companies, motor repair companies and bicycle and motorcycle companies. The majority of these enterprises are SMEs.*

An increased awareness of WHP SMEs rarely make full use of occupational health services. A collective agreement makes it easier to develop a tailor-made service better suited to SMEs. BOVAG has developed a system involving three different occupational health services that brings in tailor-made health promotion options alongside primary occupational health care. Nearly 40% of its members subscribe to this system.

As a result of these industry specific measures, awareness of WHP has grown and employers and employees in the motor vehicle and motorcycle sector are taking a more active interest in health and well-being than ever before.

## **Developing WHP**

Research has revealed that only 30% of businesses have carried out a risk-evaluation and risk inventory – something they are legally obliged to do. A campaign encouraging companies to carry out a working conditions checklist was not very successful either. The

“company council” therefore decided to organise the “Occupational health care, take it seriously” campaign (1998-2000). A long-term approach was adopted with the aim of increasing awareness about working conditions and health promotion. An action plan was based on the results of questionnaires sent to employers and employees.

## **Making changes for the better**

An external organisation was commissioned to develop the campaign. Four areas were singled out for attention and James Bond imagery used to highlight them:

- Dangerous substances: (under the heading “Not for your eyes only”). Drawing attention to the safe use and disposal of solvents, petrol, battery acid and coolants.
- External factors: (under the heading “Cold fingers”). This looked at the work environment including elements such as temperature, draughts, lighting and noise.

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- Pressure of work and physical strain: (under the heading “Dr Yes/Dr No”). This looked at both mental and physical stresses and strains.

- Safety (physical and psychological): (under the heading “You only live once”). Looking at safety in the workplace and well-being.

Special meetings for employers and employees were organised and printed material distributed. Materials developed included a recognisable logo, a video, five leaflets and a CD-ROM for both employers and employees, information packages relating to each of the four categories listed above, posters and stickers, educational material for use in training courses, press releases and prizes for the best idea for creating a healthier work environment. An evaluation study was also commissioned.

### **Further developments**

#### **Regional meetings**

Special meetings were organised for staff by the employer and employee organisations. All employees received a personal invitation to these meetings. Each of the four areas outlined above were discussed in depth.

#### **Training schedules**

The campaign has been integrated into the training schedule of “INNOVAM” (a training institute for

this sector).

#### **Checklist for working conditions**

The company council has developed two special checklists for the motor vehicle and motorcycle industry. Tools for carrying out risk inventory and risk evaluation have been developed for car and truck dealers, petrol stations, car wash companies, car rental companies, caravan and trailer companies, salvage companies, motor repair companies and bicycle and motorcycle companies.

### **Evaluation**

A survey was carried out to assess the response to the campaign, the use of the checklist and the role of occupational health services. One important stride forward was identified: since the campaign began the number of companies carrying out risk inventories and evaluation has increased significantly.

### **Looking for further improvements**

The “company council” believes that there is still much room for improvement in working conditions and workplace health promotion in the motor and motor-cycle industry. The first step is for all companies to fulfill their legal obligations, therefore bringing occupational health into the quality and environmental policy of their enterprises.

The campaign has seen some suc-

cesses however. As it provided practical solutions specific to individual needs it was relevant to many organisations. As a result recognition of the need for a health policy has clearly increased within the industry and the number of companies carrying out a risk inventory and evaluation has also gone up. There is a great deal more openness towards discussion of working conditions and well-being at work. Nevertheless, it is still a real challenge to get SMEs interested in workplace health promotion and to keep that interest going.

The “company council” has decided to continue with the campaign and develop it further as the response has been receptive and further work needs to be done.