

# Health Surveillance

Health surveillance means putting in place, regular and appropriate procedures to detect early signs of work-related ill health among employees exposed to certain health risks, AND ACTING ON THE RESULTS' (HSG 61)

It is well documented that health effects and industrial disease related to hazards at work are significant in the construction industry and engineering when compared to other occupational groups. However, striking the right balance between legislative requirements and demonstrating the role of responsible employer, consumes valuable management effort, and in particular that of the Human Resources and Safety Departments. It is therefore essential that the structures that support health related activities are robust and inclusive of a framework upon which any health management resource can be effectively integrated. Health Management service provision, which includes the setting up of a health surveillance programme will need to be underpinned by the appropriate risk assessments and defensible company policies and procedures.

A fully integrated system will achieve the necessary aims and objectives in terms of reduction and management of health effects or symptoms of industrial disease, whereas a stand alone partially developed system will be a cost with no benefit to the organisation or its employees.

Through our experience of working with both the construction industry, we have developed a training programme for both HR and operational managers in their role in workplace health management and what they may expect from the occupational health advice following a health surveillance programme.

We can help set up appropriate systems for the maintenance, storage and use of health information under the Data Protection Act 1998. It is likely that some employees seen by the health practitioners will have health problems that are covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and we can assist with advising on reasonable adjustments to their job which may be required under the Act.

It is therefore essential that the programme is managed by highly qualified registered health practitioners who will undertake the elements of the programme that are the unique role of the qualified health practitioner. As the process becomes increasingly systematic, much of the programme can be managed in house by your employees with appropriate training.

## Elements of Health Surveillance

- Identification of hazard and those employees exposed
- Responsible person
- Qualified registered health practitioner
- Individual health records and fitness to work statements
- Monitoring and review periods and referral to medical practitioner for some cases of abnormal health findings

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Workplace Health Management

