

*Chion is a family owned company based in Patras, 200 km from Athens. It produces table salt and distributes it to the market in approximately 80 different packages. It has been in operation for 60 years and employs 33 full time workers.*

Chion enjoys considerable economic success and rates 3rd in the Greek salt market. In 1998 it was awarded ISO 9002. OHS authorities see Chion as a well-established company that provides a good working environment.

#### ***Employee Participation***

Employees are included in the decision making process. The company is very informal and communication is good, staff can easily talk with owners and management as they are in the workplace on a daily basis. Employees feel free to discuss their problems and reach a satisfactory conclusion. The fact that many people have been employed here for a long time also contributes to the friendly atmosphere. This kind of environment encourages the exchange of ideas.

#### ***Flexible work patterns***

Staff work day shifts at Chion. Occasionally demand for increased production necessitates extra shifts at night. Employees are happy with this system as they alternate between the two shifts. When problems arise, employees can change their work schedule. Management is also sensitive to the needs of working parents and is happy to be flexible.

#### ***Statutory health and safety regulations***

Chion conforms to Greek OHS legislation and the operation is regularly inspected and approved by government health and safety inspectors. A senior manager is responsible for implementing health measures in the factory. There is also an on site safety engineer and employees have workplace health and safety representatives. Because Chion has fewer than 50 employees and is not involved in chemical production there is no obligation under Greek law to employ an occupational doctor.

All possible precautions are taken to secure employees' health and safety, including:

- n Fire extinguishers throughout the factory and the offices
- n Emergency exits in all working areas and offices
- n Spacious and well-ventilated production units
- n Regular cleaning of production units
- n Production and packaging is mechanised and employees do not come into direct contact with the product. All employees in the production units wear special uniforms and protective caps
- n A technical supervisor trained in safety issues and skilled in oper-



ating the technical equipment used in the production units is always on hand

- A readily accessible first aid kit is provided.

### ***Responsibility for OHS***

Safety is an important issue at Chion and the company ensures that supervisors are well informed on health and safety matters. Signs warning employees of potential hazards have been placed around the building.

### ***Excellent working conditions***

Chion operates from a spacious new building. Production units are ergonomically designed and are well ventilated in summer and warm in winter. Special attention is paid to correct lighting especially during the night shifts. Offices are also spacious and ergonomically designed with heating in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer. Production areas are kept clean and litter free. Employees take regular ten-minute breaks in special rest areas where they can also store their personal belongings and change into their work clothes.

### ***Updating skills***

New staff are given detailed introductions on how the plant operates before starting work. Because the company has to maintain its competitive position in the salt market

production technology and equipment is frequently updated.

Employees go to lectures and seminars to learn how to use this new technology and some also go abroad to further their expertise.

### ***Workplace Health Promotion***

Although Chion does not use any flammable raw materials, all staff are familiar with fire safety routines. Employees are also tested for skin irritation and respiratory problems that could be associated with salt production. Smoking is banned. Chion has not yet developed any other workplace health promotion activities, nevertheless it is still regarded as a model of good practice because the company recognises the importance of workplace health promotion and the benefits to be derived from it. Proposed WHP programmes include stopping smoking, healthy living, and training seminars on correct posture and lifting techniques. Chion became aware of WHP while working towards the ISO 9002 certificate with the regional health and safety inspectorate. This point is made in order to draw attention to the importance of providing companies, especially small companies, with information on OHS and WHP and to help management explore the possibilities of designing and implementing specific programmes. In most cases owners, particularly owners of well-established and successful companies, have a very positive attitude

towards developing OHS and WHP.

### ***Welfare related activities***

Chion provides insurance for its employees through the compulsory contribution to the National Insurance Fund (IKA). Company policy supports the rehabilitation of the long-term sick, although such cases are very rare. Staff members who live a long way from the factory have their travelling expenses reimbursed. The company has a positive attitude towards the disabled and currently employs a disabled person.

### ***Reaching conclusions***

No serious or fatal accidents have occurred at Chion and absenteeism due to occupational sickness is very low. Extremely long employment periods (sometimes a person's entire working life) indicate high levels of employee satisfaction. Both employers and employees enjoy the benefits of better occupational health, improved work satisfaction and economic growth. These factors have created a fertile ground for future development of OHS and WHP.