

About the company

The Hellenic Post company (EL.TA) is a company of the wider public sector and legally an Entity of the Private Sector regulated legislatively by Law 2414/96 that stipulates the functioning of companies of the public sector.

EL.TA is the only postal company in Greece also offering certain other financial services. There are 18 central sorting points and 1,014 post offices across the country. Approximately 10,900 employees work at the Hellenic Post. EL.TA employ approximately 400 people with special needs.

Importance of OHS

Occupational Health and Safety is of central importance to EL.TA, which over the last years have proceeded to implement and establish a number of measures for the improvement of both working conditions and the health and safety of their employees. These activities are part of a wider modernisation process that also includes the introduction of new technology, improving personnel standards etc. The modernisation of EL.TA has been an ongoing process, which will continue in view of the 2004 Olympic games.

The project features

The projects and activities described in this report have been initiated by the higher administrative segments of EL.TA but are coordinated by the newly established OHS department.

In cooperation with the Hellenic Institute for Health and Safety at Work the department began an intervention programme aimed at the improvement of both working conditions in EL.TA and ensuring the health and safety of the company's employees.

The scope of the programme is wide and it anticipates covering the total number of EL.TA employees. The pilot phase of the programme began in an Athens based post office in the suburb of Kaisariani. The programme will expand and cover the 4 central sorting points of Athens and gradually, based on ongoing evaluation of results, cover the rest of the country.

Overall, the intervention programme aims as outlined in the action plan are:

- To provide training to those responsible in EL.TA for OHS on how to plan and manage programmes for the identification and prevention of occupational hazards.
- To support the department in charge of OHS with implementing OHS legislation.
- To write an OHS code for EL.TA employees

Planning the project

Analysis of the existing working conditions at EL.TA indicated the need for improvement of both working conditions and the health and safety of employees. Although the only fatal accident reported during 2000 was due to a heart attack a total of 78 other occupational accidents occurred at

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EL.TA across the country. The majority of these were caused by traffic accidents (23/29.4%), followed by falls (15/19.2%), falls from motorbikes (15/19.2%), injuries or fractures during loading/unloading (17, 21.7%), robberies (2/2.5%), dog attacks (3/3.8%) and finally fainting/other heart conditions (3/3.8%).

EL.TA (as the majority of the wider public administration sector) does not have a system of diagnosing or reporting occupational diseases. Nevertheless, unofficial estimations indicate that the most serious health problems EL.TA employees are exposed to are musculoskeletal and cardiovascular disorders. The majority of occupational accidents (58/45.1%) occurred among those delivering the post (postmen).

This unofficial evaluation led EL.TA authorities to adopting an intervention plan for the improvement of working conditions and the health and safety of their employees. The major activities, which have been implemented to date, are:

Kaisariani post office: Healthy environment and employees

The pilot phase of this intervention programme was implemented among 332 employees at the post office in the Athenian suburb of Kaisariani. The programme comprised of two stages. The objectives of the first stage were:

- The quantitative and qualitative identification and description of the factors, which could endanger the health and safety of employees

- The improvement of working areas (based on the previous identification of dangerous factors) firstly by suggestions and secondly by specific implementation plans ensuring a friendly, safe and healthy working environment.

The objectives of the second stage were:

- Planning and implementing a medical programme aimed at monitoring employee health by conducting specific medical examinations and tests and associating findings with the dangerous factors of the working environment that were identified during the first stage of the intervention.
- Writing an action plan with specific activities and interventions for improving health and safety for employees with workplace health promotion playing a central role.

Only the first stage of the study has been completed and the findings and conclusions have been published in a first report. Using questionnaires employees indicated that they mostly suffered from musculoskeletal disorders and their complaints concerned stress, repetitive and monotonous movements and visual fatigue. According to the study the factors identified as harmful for the health and safety of the employees were noise (exceeding 55 dB(A)), low artificial and physical lighting and poor ventilation. The programme continues into the second phase and a final report with final recommendations will soon be available.

OSH and WHP training

As it is stated in the Greek legislation, all companies including the public administration sector need to have employee committees responsible for OSH. In EL.TA there is a central committee responsible for OSH and there are regional OSH committees in every prefecture. The company's OSH department in association with the Hellenic Institute of Health and Safety at Work organised seminars and training sessions with all committee members regarding:

- Greek OSH legislation
- The rights and obligations deriving from the legislation
- OSH issues, particularly those in connection with EL.TA
- Workplace health promotion

The central OSH committee has also received information from the occupational physicians concerning the ergonomic planning of working areas and their rights and obligations concerning OSH matters.

Furthermore, because of the unfortunate events of 11th September and the events that followed it was termed necessary to inform employees of the central Athens post office about the dangers of anthrax and train them in preventive and protective measures.

Employee health

The company's OSH department closely monitors employee health and is in the process of establishing a personal

medical file system. Special attention is given to requests for changing working positions. Employees who express such requests are examined by the company's occupational physician, their medical history is recorded and each case is monitored closely. During the last year the company's occupational physicians have conducted approximately 60 visits to the two largest cities Athens and Thessalonica.

A promising future

As the activities mentioned in this report have been recently introduced at EL.TA there are no evaluation results yet. The company's immediate plans are to introduce a system for monitoring and reporting occupational diseases, accidents and employee satisfaction in order to evaluate the effect of the OSH and WHP programmes, which are being implemented at present. Future plans also include:

- Restructuring working areas based on the assessment conducted during the Intervention Programme
- Publishing and distributing pamphlets concerning first aid and alcohol and drug addiction.
- Establishing a medical file system for all employees
- Obtaining medical and laboratory equipment to conduct the necessary medical and laboratory tests