

ZENECA

Zeneca is based in an industrial region close to Athens and employs 32 people. It produces pesticides and public health products. In 1999, it was listed among the 100 most successful companies in Greece. Zeneca was one of the first companies to obtain ISO 9002 and was also given an award for its excellent performance in safety, health and the environment. The company is not part of a supportive structure.

Employee participation

Zeneca has a policy of involving employees in work related matters. Discussion on OHS problems is encouraged and suggestions welcomed. Employee knowledge and expertise is valued highly and it is understood that everyone has an important contribution to make. Many important health and safety improvements have come about as a direct result of consultation with staff. Small tokens of appreciation are given to employees who suggest practical solutions to problems within the company. Although regular meetings with staff and management take place, the vast majority of employees express their ideas informally with factory management.

Statutory health and safety regulations

Zeneca employs an on site safety engineer, an occupational doctor and employee workplace health and safety representatives. Every possible precaution is taken to secure employees' health and safety, especially as Zeneca is involved in the repacking of potentially hazardous chemicals. Special precau-

tions regarding such chemicals include:

- n Provision of emergency equipment for use should a worker come into contact with chemicals
- n Cleaning all production areas with special machines at the end of the working day
- n Preventing contaminated water leaving the site
- n Providing a separate exit in the showers so that workers cannot carry chemicals home
- n Destroying all chemical storage containers safely on the factory premises.

Feeling safe at work

Workers report that they feel safe working with Zeneca. Management believes that this is due to a number of factors, including:

- n Good communication between employees and management
- n Frequent seminars on health and safety issues
- n Information signs throughout the factory reminding workers of safety measures and potential hazards.

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Exemplary working conditions
The factory is designed ergonomically throughout. Recent office refurbishment provided more space, while colour schemes were chosen by employees. Production units are spacious and well ventilated but warm in winter. Free coffee and soft drinks are available during the employees' 30-minute break. The company also provides employees with their own lockers and a separate room for smokers (although smoking is prohibited within the factory). Work schedules can be organised to suit working mothers and those who live far away from the workplace. Training is an important feature at Zeneca and staff are encouraged to attend seminars and courses to update their skills and keep up with technological developments. The occupational doctor, technical safety personnel and chemists have been on training programmes relating to their occupational health roles within the company. When new employees are taken on, training is provided on dealing with chemicals and the safe use of equipment. Their performance is closely monitored once they start work.

Workplace Health Promotion

WHP projects are overseen by the occupational doctor and a senior manager. Tests such as measuring blood pressure are performed by the doctor, usually on the request of staff. Personal medical profiles

are then kept on record. A number of health promotion programmes have been implemented: stopping smoking, safe driving, healthy lifestyle, HIV/AIDS, fire safety and safe lifting techniques. These have been well received by staff.

Welfare related activities

Zeneca provides private medical insurance for all employees. The long-term sick are supported and help is given to rehabilitate them in the workplace (although such cases are rare). In one case, a chronic alcoholic employee was given medical treatment and counselling to help overcome this problem. This employee still works at Zeneca despite past medical and personal problems. The company also operates a positive policy towards employing disabled people. Company expertise on chemical production, safety and water sewage treatment is shared via lectures to other pesticide industries and universities. Zeneca enjoys a good relationship with the local community.

Drawing conclusions

No serious or fatal accidents have occurred at Zeneca in the last 15 years. Staff turnover is low; many employees stay with the company until retirement age. Absenteeism due to occupational illness is also very low. This points to a strong link between good workplace

health and safety policies and a high standard of employee health and personal satisfaction.

The most important factors needed to achieve this are good communication channels, a willingness on behalf of management to co-operate with employees and listen to their proposals and criticisms and good working conditions.

However, Zeneca believes that SMEs need greater support from the government if WHP is to flourish. Establishing health and safety networks and dissemination of experience and information is also essential, as is closer co-operation with universities and colleges.