

*The Water Team S.r.l. is responsible for the entire cycle of water treatment: pre-treatment, processing, purification and recycling. High levels of purity are achieved and maintained by the internal chemical laboratory which is manned by qualified maintenance technicians and plant supervisors.*

Eighteen people work here and all have a degree or have completed some form of professional training. Three work part-time but nobody works night shifts or is employed on a short-term contract.

#### ***Securing health and safety at work***

At the end of 1995 official guidelines were introduced to safeguard health and safety at the workplace for all full-time employees plus anyone involved with the workplace on an intermittent basis. Employees are also responsible for contributing to their own health and safety by informing superiors of any problems that might jeopardise their health and wellbeing.

#### ***Involving employees***

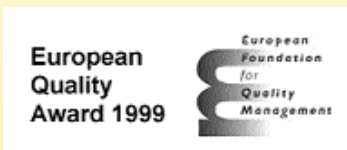
The enterprise bases its health and safety system on the OHSAS 18001:1999 quality certificate guidelines. Bringing employees into the decision making process is thought to play an important part in improving health and safety. Staff have a day-to-day understanding of the way the plant co-operates and have a valuable contribution to make. Staff are encouraged to make suggestions for

enhancing the working environment and these are taken seriously. Employees can either discuss their thoughts directly with management or make contact via e-mail or on the intranet. In addition to the annual general meeting (AGM), three monthly meetings are arranged so that staff can air their views.

Two months before the annual general meeting all the employees fill in a questionnaire anonymously. Forty-two questions touch on a number of areas: quality and improvement, organisation, relationships with other employees, pay, benefits, safety, communication, management, personal satisfaction, personal development. A questionnaire also goes out to the clients in order to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

At the AGM the results of the questionnaires are presented and discussed. Any problem areas identified are talked through openly and mutually acceptable solutions found.

Analysis of the questionnaires revealed that staff morale is quite high and that the atmosphere at work is good. Staff are also happy with their working conditions and





job security. Customers are satisfied with the service they are getting too. Despite these encouraging results the organisation is committed to continued improvement.

Last year (1999) the absenteeism rate was four days per employee and only one accident was recorded. Efforts are made to bring the long-term sick back to the workplace, and an official policy on this is in operation.

### ***Health at work: taking things a step further***

Improving the health of employees is seen as a positive aim, not only in financial terms by reducing absenteeism, but in terms of creating a pleasant productive workplace that staff enjoy coming to. When problems are identified a concerted effort goes into solving them and a budget is allocated for putting concrete measures in place. Emphasis is also placed on good training and staff are encouraged to further their skills.

Health at work is regulated by law, but within this organisation health and wellbeing is addressed over and above legal requirements: Measures have been taken to make the working day as comfortable as possible; employees have a canteen/catering service where good meals are offered and special diets can be catered for on request. Break and rest rooms are also pro-

vided, along with medical services. Programmes exist for bringing the long-term sick back into the workplace, but staff with personal problems are also looked after sympathetically too. For example, if a person needs to work part-time for a while, this can be accommodated.

Social events where employees can relax together are organised at least once a year. These special events include a family dinner.

The business extends its social arm into the community and sponsors a local cycle team and a number of social and cultural community initiatives. The enterprise also works in partnership with schools, colleges and universities and arranges visits to the plant and talks with staff.

### ***Looking at the results***

Absenteeism within this business is below average and staff turnover is low. This indicates that employee health is good and that job satisfaction is also high. As indicated earlier, analysis of the questionnaires suggests that morale is excellent and that there is a good working atmosphere and good relationships between staff. Job security is a factor that influences well-being and as prospects are good here, this has a positive impact on employees. In 1998 Water Team was the successful candidate and voted Italian Quality

Company; it was also awarded the EFQM European Quality Award both in 1999 and 2000 – the only Italian company to receive this distinction!

There is no evidence that this policy has improved productivity or that it is economically beneficial, but management will continue to focus on good health and a specific budget has been allocated to provide resources for health promotion activities over the next few years.