



“Improving Employee Health - Occupational Health at Work Week.”

VolkerRail - A Multidisciplinary Railway Infrastructure Contractor.

Volker Rail provides a wide range of contracting services to the railway infrastructure industry, from major projects to track renewals, maintenance and specialised operations including signalling, overhead line equipment (OHLE), power distributions, plant and welding solutions.

A fresh new approach is being introduced across Volker Rail to ensure consistency and understanding in ensuring an open culture which in turn will ensure the cost effectiveness and success of the business going forward.

Volker Rail has an internal occupational health resource which is ensuring that there is a comprehensive understanding of the occupational health risks that face the modern work force and led to the implementation of informed strategies to reduce the risks of occupational ill health and promote pro-active healthy living. Volker Rail and have set a target of a 5% reduction year on year of number of days lost through occupational ill health which will be tracked and reported to their senior management team. They provide internal health surveillance for hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS), noise induced hearing loss, lung functions etc. and are due shortly to issue a new stress policy.

Volker Rail also run wellbeing campaigns on issues such as diet, salt intake, blood sugar levels' etc. and provide drop in clinics for their employees to discuss their health concerns with their occupational health resource.

1st August 2011 Occupational Health at Work Week

The purpose of occupational health at work week was to highlight the key areas that face Volker Rail employees and to advise employees on simple measures they can use to reduce the health risks and associated occupational ill health. Furthermore this initiative and current health surveillance programmes are aimed at improving sickness absence levels, and reducing litigation costs. Volker Rail are in the process of further analysing and splitting out all recognised occupational health related absences from the overall absenteeism statistics.

More people become ill as a result of their work than are killed or injured in industrial accidents. Most diseases caused by work do not kill, but involve years of pain, suffering and discomfort, affecting quality of life.

The occupational health at work week event was advertised by poster and Volker Rail issued further topical posters throughout the week outlining the main topics of occupational health and welfare. These can be seen at the end of the study.

Evaluation of the Occupational Health at Work Week.

The effects of the occupational health at work week cannot be underestimated as it was about raising personal awareness of the health risks to our employees and sub-contractors, the purpose and benefits of the control measures that we put in place and the promotion of working better together. The financial benefits to the company is difficult to measure as can only be realised in the long term through the monitoring of occupational health related sickness levels (which is being tracked) – however, this is secondary to the main purpose of the week as VolkerRail is a responsible and caring contractor that puts the health and safety of its employees at the forefront of its operations.

Future Plans

VolkerRail will maintain its promotion of fitness for work through its 'AIM' (Attitude, Influence & Management) campaign which incorporates and promotes positive health & safety, quality and environmental initiatives. Included are a 'cycle to work scheme' where all employees are given the opportunity to purchase a new bicycle at an attractively reduced price through their salary , encouraging them to use pedal power and leave the car at home where possible.

In addition, VolkerRail analyses and reacts to new research in occupational health. For example, recent advice from the Department of Health identifies a strong association between welding and the development of pneumococcal disease, particularly lobar pneumonia. Therefore all of our welders will shortly be offered the recommended PPV23 vaccine.



Occupational Health Safety and the Environment

More people become ill as a result of their work than are killed or injured in industrial accidents. Most diseases caused by work do not kill, but involve years of pain, suffering and discomfort, affecting quality of life.

VolkerRail will issue posters throughout the week outlining the main topics of occupational health and welfare. For more information and advice please contact the HSQE Team.

Approximately 1 million people suffer a workplace injury each year.

Studies held in 2009 show 1.3 million people who had worked in those 12 months, and a further 800,000 former workers, suffered from ill health which they thought was work related.

28.5 million days were lost overall (1.2 days per worker) from illness in 2009, 23.4 million (82%) were due to work-related ill health and 5.1 million due to workplace injury.

There are around 4000 deaths a year that are from asbestos related cancers.

Rail workers report a higher incidence of work related ill health than similar occupational groups.

Averaged data for the period between 2003/4 and 2009/10 indicated the following by occupational group:

The Railway Industry reported 5850 instances of occupational ill health per 100,000 employed in a 12 period.

This was opposed to:

- 3470 average for all industries
- 3740 for the transport industry in general
- 3510 for transport drivers and operatives
- 4800 in construction

Types of Hazards to Health caused by work are:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Chemicals
- Extremes in temperature, pressure and humidity
- Stress
- Sprains, strains and pains
- Dusts, vapours and fumes
- Fatigue
- Non-Ionising Radiation - Sunlight
- Manual Handling

For more information or advice please contact your HSQE directorate





Manual Handling

Approximately 54 million work days are lost each year because of back injuries. As nearly all jobs involve some form of manual handling which includes lifting, pulling, pushing and carrying a range of objects it is important to know and use the correct manual handling techniques

60 % of adults suffer back pain annually and 30 % of these become chronic sufferers. They may not be disabled, but they suffer from a dull ache sensation in their back, and 85% of sufferers receive no specific diagnosis

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations states that no-one should lift or move a load which is "so heavy as likely to cause injury to them".

If it is not practical to eliminate manual handling in the workplace VolkerRail will assess and measure the task in order to reduce the risk to you to the lowest reasonably practical level.

The risk assessment considers the Task; the Individuals capability; the characteristic of the Load and the Environment the load is to be lifted in. This is often referred to as the TILE assessment.

Think about the task

- Is there space to make the lift safely?
- What type of lift is needed, one man or a team lift?
- Will it need to be lifted in stages to maintain a safe grip and prevent injuries?

Individual capabilities

- Can you handle the load yourself, or do you need help for a team lift?
- Don't assume everyone can lift the same weight.
- When two or more people are lifting a load, one person (preferably the most experienced) must take control and co-ordinate the lift.

Assessing the load

- If you can, check you know the weight of the load before lifting.
- Is it bulky; unstable; difficult to grasp; sharp?
- Can you take hold of it safely and keep hold during the lift?

Environment

- Is the weather going to make a difference to the lift such as frost, rain or wind?
- Will you be walking on ballast or uneven ground?
- Is there a clear walkway with good lighting at the work area?
- Will you still see your feet on the floor when carrying the load?

During the lift always use a good handling technique:

- Stand reasonably close to the load, feet hip-width apart, one foot slightly forward pointing in the direction you're going.
- Don't carry a load too close to your body.
- Carry out the lift smoothly using the legs to take the strain, keeping the back straight and arms close to the body.
- Don't lift to a height from the floor, do the lift in stages.
- Breathe normally, don't hold your breath during a lift.
- Don't carry a load that obscures your vision.
- Avoid twisting your body when lifting or carrying a load.

For more information or advice please contact your HSQE directorate



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Noise

Approximately nine million people in the UK suffer some form of hearing loss. This equates to 19% of the population or 1 in 7 people.

In 2009 it is estimated that 17,000 people who had worked in the last 12 months believe their hearing was made worse by work.

Over one million employees at work are exposed to noise that puts their hearing at risk.

One in ten iPod/MP3 listeners will suffer permanent hearing loss as a result of listening to music too loud.

Noise at high levels can result in damage to the inner part of your ear which will reduce your hearing ability, this damage is called noise induced hearing loss.

If you're standing two metres away from your colleague and you are trying to have a normal conversation but cannot communicate without shouting, then action must be undertaken to reduce the exposure to noise.

If you're working in a noisy VolkerRail are required to reduce your noise exposure. We can do this in a number of ways:

- Regularly maintaining plant or machinery.
- Substituting noisy plant and machinery for quieter equipment.
- Implementing acoustic barriers to protect you from the noise.
- Or simply reduce your exposure to the noise.

You are provided with ear defenders and are required by law to wear them in noisy environments.

In particularly noisy areas/work sites VolkerRail will ensure that we map and sign hearing protection zones.

For more information or advice please contact your HSQE directorate

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Hand-Arm Vibration

It is estimated that two million workers are at risk from Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) through the use of hand-guided power equipment and powered machines

There are approximately 280,000 sufferers of HAVS, 225,000 being men and 33,000 women.

What is hand arm -vibration?

Hand-arm vibration is the vibration transmitted into your hands and arms when you use hand held powered tools. Too much exposure to hand-arm vibration can cause Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS).

What is Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)?

It's a disorder that affects the nerves, blood vessels, muscles and the joints of the hands, wrists and arms. HAVS includes vibration white finger (VWF) which can cause severe pain in the affected fingers.

Early signs which show you might have a problem are

- Pain, tingling or numbness in your hands, wrists and arms when using the tools,
- Tingling and numbness in the fingers once you've finished using the tools.
- You're unable feel things with your fingers after coming off the tools and you will have a loss of grip strength in the hands.
- If it's cold and wet, the tips of your fingers go white then red and painful when they warm up.

If you have any of the problems listed here tell your supervisor or any member of the HSQE team who will be able to get the required professional assessment.

VolkerRail will assess the risks arising from vibration to its employees when using hand held tools. The assessment seeks to either eliminate or reduce the level of exposure to vibration to a level that is acceptable.

Typical types of equipment that require assessments are:

- Concrete breakers.
- Rail Saws.
- Impact wrenches.
- Chainsaws.

How can you help to reduce the risks?

- Use low vibration tools.
- Use the best (right) tools for the job.
- Make sure cutting tools are sharp before use.
- Check tools have been properly maintained.
- Don't use a tool for longer than you are supposed to.
- Don't grip or force a tool more than you have to.
- Encourage good circulation in the hands by: keeping hands warm and dry by wearing warm gloves and try to cut down on smoking if using tools as it reduces blood flow to hands.

For more information or advice please contact your HSQE directorate

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