Brunei has a total worker population of 173,501, with private sector accounting for 127,410; the remaining 46,091 workers are being employed in the government sector. The majority (68.7%) of private sector employees are foreign workers. A greater number of workers (28%) is employed in the construction industry, whereas 4% of workers are employed in the oil and gas sectors. Currently, there are three (3) government agencies involved in occupational safety and health at workplace in the country; i.e. Occupational Health Division (OHD) of the Department of Health, Workplace Safety and Health Division of Department of Labour and Safety Unit of the Public Works Department. The Occupational Health Division of the Department of Health Services was established in 1993 as a unit and was upgraded to a division in 2004. The vision of the division is to “Promote a safe and healthy working environment and ensure that the workforce in Brunei is healthy and productive”. Currently, the division comprises of 22 staff members; i.e. 8 Occupational Health Physicians, 5 Occupational Health Nurses, 4 Occupational Health and Safety Inspectors and 5 supportive staff members. The main functions of the division are: surveillance of workers’ health, occupational health clinical service, surveillance of working environment, investigation of complaints and workplace accidents & work-related diseases, health education and health promotion, training, collaboration with other agencies and conducting research and studies on occupational health and safety.

Surveillance of workers’ health – Pre-employment medical examinations are mandatory in Brunei, under the Employment Order 2009 (previously Labour Laws of Brunei). All prospective workers are required to undergo pre-employment health screening in order to determine whether they are fit to perform duty in particular working environment. This creates an opportunity for the employee to know more about hazards at workplace, preventive measures, usage of PPE etc., which in the long run improves health and safety at workplace. Surveillance of working environment is equally important as medical surveillance for the prevention of occupational and work-related diseases. As such, OHD gives greater emphasis on workplace surveillance activities and conducts workplace OSH audits, inspections and risk assessments in both government and private sector establishments on regular basis. OSH inspectorate team of the division comprises of an Occupational Health Physician, an Occupational Health Nurse and OSH Inspectors. These inspectorate activities are mainly carried out on advisory capacity. Following the inspection important issues are immediately brought to the attention of management and advised accordingly. In addition, detailed reports are sent to the employers and other relevant agencies (e.g., Department of Labour), giving them recommendations with regards to occupational health and safety at the workplace. Follow up visits are conducted at workplaces that have been assessed to have poor health and safety conditions. This team approach contributes significantly to improve occupational safety and health at workplace due to many reasons.

The division conducts investigation of workplace complaints, accidents and work-related diseases.

Accidents and work-related diseases are reported to the division by attending medical practitioners using reporting forms designed by the division.

Biography

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