



VINNUEFTIRLITIÐ

ADMINISTRATION OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health

The role of the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health (AOSH) is to prevent accidents and health damage in the workplace by securing that the working environment is as safe and healthy as possible. In this text, the activities and organisation of the AOSH are explained.

Act on Working Conditions, Health and Safety in the Workplace

The current legislation, Act on Working Conditions, Health and Safety in the Workplace No. 46/1980 and a number of regulations ratified by the Minister for Social Affairs, cover workplaces on land with a staff of one or more persons. The AOSH is responsible for enforcing the legislation.

The purpose of the legislation

The main purpose of the legislation is as follows:

- to ensure safe and healthy working environment in accordance with social and technical development in society;
- to provide a basis whereby the workplaces themselves can solve their working environment problems.

In the legislation, the initiative and responsibility of employers and employees and the specific role of AOSH is among many other topics described.

Safety and health activities within companies

The legislation places certain responsibility on everyone in the workplace. The illustration shows that the widest responsibility rests with the employer. He/she is responsible for ensuring the greatest possible safety in the workplace as a whole as well as providing good and healthy work conditions. Furthermore, he or she shall ensure that the employees get necessary information and training regarding risks and work procedures.

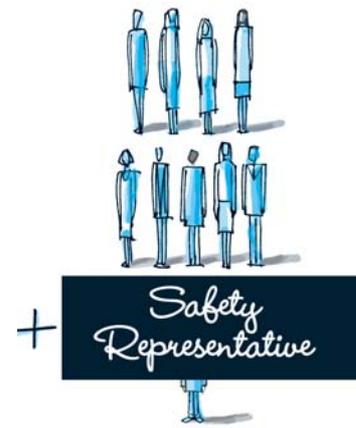
The responsibility of the foreman, who represents the employer, is limited within the area that he/she supervises. The foreman is responsible for the quality of equipment, to see to that safety measures be carried out and dangerous situations prevented. The responsibility of the employee is, likewise, within the limits of his or her own work and work procedures and he/she is required to report any shortcomings or faulty equipment to the superior or the safety representative.

The principle demands, which the legislation on health and safety in the workplace makes on employers and employees, can be seen from such statements as "... the employer and/or his foreman shall ensure good working conditions, healthy surroundings and safety in the workplace, in close cooperation with the employees of the company and the trade union representative." This applies to workplaces where there are 1-9 employees.



Where there are 10 or more employees, special representatives of the employer and employees are given the role of promoting and enforcing safety and health activities in the workplace. The employer appoints one person as a safety manager (*öryggisvörður*) and the employees choose another one from their group to undertake the role of a safety representative (*öryggistrúnaðarmaður*).

A committee responsible for working conditions, health and safety is to be established in companies with fifty or more employees. The functions of the safety representative, the safety manager and the safety committee are prescribed in regulation No. 77/1982.



In the regulations there are also clauses which explain how a safety representative is to be elected. The trade union representative is to prepare and carry out the election of the safety representative of the employees. Should the election be delayed, others may take the initiative. The AOSH is to be notified of the outcome of the election. The regulations also describe these representatives' duties and rights, for example to have the opportunity to be educated on matters of work conditions, health and safety and the right to get any information that is relevant to their duties.

What the AOSH does

The role of the AOSH according to the Act on working conditions, health and safety at the workplace is as follows:

- To inspect and oversee that the legislation and regulations connected with safety, health and working conditions are being followed. Workplaces with a paid staff and farms are inspected according to a plan which is set out in each local division. Additionally, workplaces are visited according to individual wishes and demands. During the inspection, indications are given about necessary improvements to be made.
- To review and measure noise and pollution in workplaces, analyse air (temperature, moisture, draught), control light and check on gasses and oxygen in confined spaces.
- To test and review machines and technical instruments such as heavy duty equipment (i.e. cranes, earth moving machinery, fork lift trucks, lifting platforms, lifting equipment etc.) and agricultural machinery, elevators, ski-elevators, boilers and pressure vessels.
- To write, publish and distribute regulations and instructions on the basis of the Act on working conditions, health and safety at the workplace.
- To write, publish and distribute informative materials (newsletters, booklets, posters, guidelines, manuals, videotapes etc.)
- To run courses for drivers of heavy duty equipment, for drivers of dangerous and poisonous chemicals and for safety representatives and safety managers.
- To investigate reported work accidents, gather and evaluate information about them for the purpose of prevention.
- To carry out research on work-related diseases and psycho-social risk factors and provide consultation regarding occupational and psycho-social factors.
- To control the import and handling of poisonous and dangerous materials, including explosives.
- To report on the design of new working environment and to check whether they fulfill required standards.
- To inspect imported machinery and equipment and check whether the required safety equipment is included, and whether the labels and instructions are in Icelandic.

Contacting the AOSH

The AOSH can be contacted about all the tasks and projects which have been mentioned. Everyone can seek advice and opinion from the AOSH's experts, as well as help in settling of disputes. Furthermore, anyone is welcome to contact the AOSH but it is preferable that the contact is made by the safety representative. Therefore, employees who have complaints concerning working conditions, health and safety in the workplace should turn to their safety representative. He/she then tries to solve the problem in cooperation with the safety manager or the foreman/foremen. The aid and approval of the employer is sought if necessary. Depending on the nature and development of the case, aid from the AOSH might be sought. The AOSH is bound to complete secrecy about sources of contact from employees and safety representatives.

If an inspection of a workplace reveals that improvements in terms of work conditions, health and safety need to be made, instructions or indications are given by the AOSH inspectors to the company. Maintaining good relationship with employers and employees in all matters of dispute is emphasized, and serious measures are not taken until all other ways of solving the problem have been tried. Therefore, it varies how much time a company is given in order to improve facilities or work conditions.

Decisions taken by the AOSH may be appealed to the board of the Administration and after that to the Minister for Social Affairs.

Reporting accidents

The employer or his/her representative must report accidents to the AOSH and also to the Police in the case of serious accidents. Serious accidents are to be reported immediately and less serious ones by filling in a special form (available at all Local Division Offices and on the homepage) and sending it to the respective AOSH-office.



Revenue of the AOSH

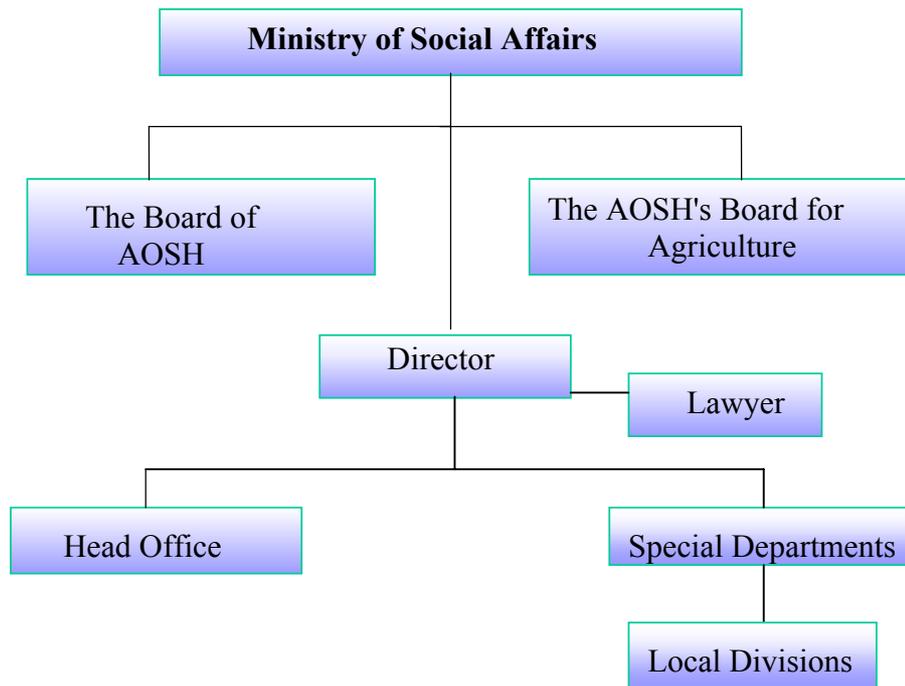
The AOSH receives its revenue from two sources. The main source is a special tax paid by employers; the other source is fee for services rendered by the Administration, such as safety tests and courses enabling people to qualify themselves, for example as drivers of heavy equipment machinery, drivers of dangerous chemicals or as safety representatives and safety managers.

The Organization Chart of the AOSH

The AOSH is an independent institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Board consists of 9 persons. The Minister for Social Affairs appoints one person, who becomes the director of the board. The other eight are appointed by the Minister according to proposals of the employers' and labour unions: The Icelandic Federation of Labour (Alþýðusamband Íslands) proposes three, The Federation of State and Municipal Employees (Bandalag starfsmanna ríkis og bæja) one, The Confederation of Icelandic Employers (Samtök atvinnulífsins) three, and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland (Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga) one.

A special board handles the affairs of agriculture. This board consists of two representatives of the Farmer's Union (Bændasamtökin), one from the Icelandic Federation of Labour and one from the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The director of this board is the director of the AOSH-board.

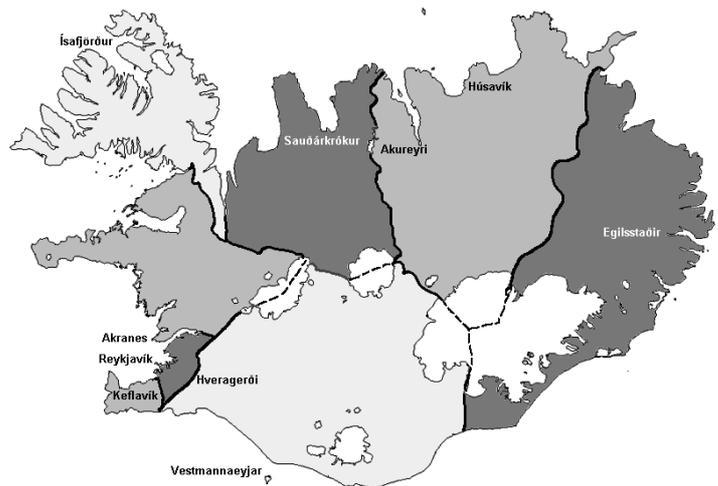
The Organization Chart



The Minister for Social Affairs appoints the Director of the AOSH who is in charge of daily affairs. The Administration has about 65 employees in 61,5 full-time positions, thereof 42 are in Reykjavík.

The Special Departments, which all are located in Reykjavík, are the following: Department of Industrial Hygiene, Department of Training and Information, Department of Research and Occupational Health, Technical Department, Department of Heavy Duty Equipment and Department of Development and Inspection. There is also a lawyer employed by the AOSH.

The eight Local Divisions are under the Department of Development and Inspection. They are located in all parts of the country: Reykjavík and surroundings (in Reykjavík), The West (in Akranes), The Western Fjords (in Ísafjörður), The North-West (in Sauðárkrúkur), The North-East (in Akureyri with a branch office in Húsavík), The Eastern Fjords (in Egilsstaðir), The South (in Hveragerði with a branch office in Vestmannaeyjar) and Reykjanes (in Keflavík).



Main office: Bildshöfði 16,
110 Reykjavík
Tel.: + 354-550 4600
Fax + 354-550 4610
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 8:20-16:00
email: vinnueftirlit@ver.is
www.vinnueftirlit.is