


TOP STORY

100 years of volunteer dedication

Safety representatives are important seismographs for occupational safety and health

Whether it be a lack of sun protection when working outdoors or not enough breaks doing computer work, safety representatives walk around their companies with open eyes and help companies with their occupational safety and health. They make a significant contribution to identifying risks and hazards and make the world of work safer – something they have been doing in Germany for 100 years.

The year 1919 marked a turning point for Germany in many ways. The First World War ended with the Treaty of Versailles, and other matters once again took centre stage. Workplace health and safety also gained in importance. The top priority was preventing accidents, because the number of fatal accidents in the workplace was very high. In 1917, 7,904 people died in an accident at work. In order to address this, on 20 October 1919 the Association of Statutory Workplace Accident Institutions decided to introduce a new honorary position in all larger companies: the ‘accident confidante’. He was elected by the employees to highlight shortcomings in workplace safety and to make suggestions for improvements.

This person of trust for all issues concerning safety and health at work still exists today. If a company has more than 20 employees, they are required to appoint safety representatives. ‘Currently, 690,000 safety representatives voluntarily make an invaluable contribution to occupational safety and health in Germany,’ said Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of the DGUV. Their range of duties has changed considerably, because OSH has long since become more than just a matter of preventing accidents.

As the world of work changes, protecting health and preventing work-related health hazards are increasingly becoming the focus of occupational



Photo: Jürgen Schulzki

Safety representatives provide their work colleagues with important information and advice on workplace safety and health.

safety and health. In addition to technical expertise, the methodological and social skills of safety representatives are more in demand today than ever before. Due to their closeness to fellow workers, they are important disseminators and can be involved in site inspections or in the preparation of risk assessments. ‘Safety representatives have become workplace safety and health representatives,’ said Hussy. This makes it all the more important to support them in their voluntary work. The German Social Accident Insurance institutions do this with comprehensive training programmes. One of the ways that company owners and managers can raise the visibility of safety representatives and their work is by acknowledging the good ideas suggested by safety representatives and communicating this throughout the company.

Web: www.dguv.de › **Webcode:** dp1317586
 (German only)

**FYI
 Training**

88,412

**Safety
 representatives**

participated in training programmes offered by the German Social Accident Insurance institutions in 2018. There were 4,606 courses and seminars with a total of 179,589 training days.

Web: www.dguv.de
 › **Webcode:** d668656
 (German only)



Photo: Jan Röhl, DGUV

Thank You!

Dear Reader,

What would occupational health and safety in Germany be without volunteers? It's remarkable that every day people are willing to use their knowledge, skills and experience voluntarily and without extra remuneration for the good of others. Safety representatives walk around 'their' companies and institutions, with open eyes, pointing out shortcomings, giving tips and making suggestions for improvements. As a work colleague, they are the contact person for many questions relating to safety and health at work – and all of this on top of their usual job.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of these important people, who are as relevant as ever. Their duties and responsibilities have changed as much as the world of work itself, but what hasn't changed is the special qualities of this position. Safety representatives are an important contributing factor to successfully improving safety and health, and will continue to be so in the future. In the spirit of a culture of prevention, safety representatives make sure that everyone keeps an eye on even the small things and that people communicate with one another – always working towards the goal of healthy and safe work.

So, I'd like to say a huge thank you to all safety representatives. Their dedication and empathy make an indispensable contribution to occupational safety and health. For this, they deserve respect, recognition and appreciation.

Dr Stefan Hussy

Director General of the DGUV

'Monitoring is good, trust is better'

What role does working time play in safety and health at work? How important is trust in terms of working time and can you work from home without a guilty conscience? How does remote managing work and what new challenges are managers facing? DGUV Kompakt spoke with Professor Dirk Windemuth, Director of the Institute for Work and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance (IAG).

Professor Windemuth, how important are regulations on working times, rest periods and breaks for safety and health at work?

The regulations for working times and breaks laid down in the German Working Time Act are both logical and beneficial. The minimum rest period of eleven hours stipulated in the Act, that is, the time from finishing work to starting work, provides a framework for sufficient sleep to recharge. For adults, this is an average of eight hours per night. We need the extra three hours in the rest period for the commute to and from work, for family responsibilities, for everyday errands, for our leisure time, etc. The eleven-hour rest period is the only way to ensure enough restorative sleep. A lack of sleep over a longer period of time leads to poorer physical and mental recuperation. This can lead to health impairments and mistakes which contribute to accidents. A person's productivity also suffers as a result. The consequences are company losses and extra work for employees because they no longer work efficiently.

The ruling of the European Court of Justice on the systematic recording of working time has sparked a lot of debate. The ruling abolishes trust-based working hours – a point of criticism. How much trust is necessary when it comes to working time?

People can't live or work together for long periods of time without trust. This is more important than ever in modern working life. The opposite of trust is mistrust, which leads to monitoring. But for the vast majority of jobs, monitoring is no longer possible in the way it used to be. Work that can be measured in quantities, such as piecework, is no longer the norm. Instead, there are far more com-

plex work results that are almost impossible to measure from the outside in hours. There is no point in quantifying working time in terms of being present in the office if one doesn't also introduce complete supervision of the employee's work. This form of monitoring has never been helpful and definitely doesn't fit in with modern forms of work. In other words, monitoring is good, trust is better.

When we talk about working from home, trust plays an even greater role. What can workers do to not feel guilty when they sometimes take a break when working from home and can't be contacted?

For many people, working from home is a completely new way of working – free of supervision and pressure. This is something that people have to at first learn. And you also have to learn to trust your colleagues to do their work when they are not physically present in the company. This requires trust from both sides. Being contactable when working at home is a good example of this. Of course, it's important that work colleagues can contact me when I work at home. But they also have to understand that occasionally it's not possible to contact me whenever they want. Even at home, an employee has to observe the rules for breaks, eat something after a few hours or grab a drink now and then; after all that's what we do in the office too. Of course, working time and concentrating on work must be part and parcel of work. It must also be accepted that there is a distinct end-of-the-day for work at home. Then it's time to put your pen down and turn off the computer. This isn't a trivial matter, because studies show that people work more when there is trust-based working time, which is usually the case when working from home.

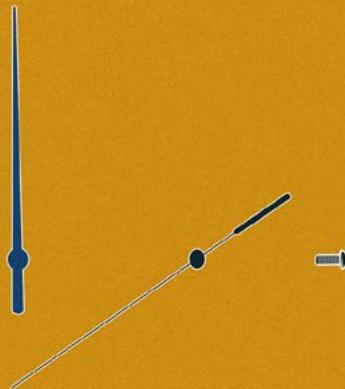
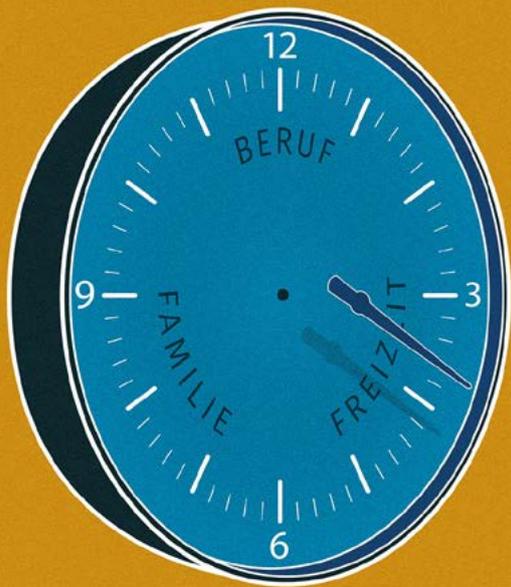


Photo: Thomas Walloch

Work 4.0 brings more flexibility and new perspectives to the world of work. Trust between managers and employees is a basic requirement for working from home.

Clear rules or agreements help both sides to know what the boundaries are and to stick to them. Besides that, if work is based on mutual trust, then work is more effective and much more enjoyable.

But trust also means that managers have a special responsibility?

Working from home and managing remotely is also something new for supervisors. It's often difficult to give spontaneous feedback via electronic media instead of face-to-face. But you can learn how to do this as well as other emotional competencies. And it's important to acknowledge that many managers have already made great strides here. The most difficult thing is to keep in close contact with employees working outside of a company's premises. This contact is also important in order to avoid the well-documented discriminatory treatment of employees who work from home in company decisions, for example when it comes to promotions.

In other words, trust is a must?

Absolutely! Trust within a company is a crucial factor for a positive, appreciative and preventive work climate. We're currently in the process of trying to confirm this

'It's important to acknowledge that many managers have already made great strides here. The most difficult thing is to keep in close contact with employees working outside of a company's premises.'

Professor Dirk Windemuth

through a joint research study with a South Korean partner institute. As such, I'm really pleased that the **kommmitmensch** prevention campaign is providing huge support to this key feature of a company's work climate. Trust is also very important in the campaign's action fields of leadership, error management culture and company climate. There are a lot of tools available to help people work together across hierarchies in their companies.

Photo: IAG / Stephan Floß



Professor Dirk Windemuth
Director of the Institute for Work and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance (IAG).

TOPIC

Cooperation with Pakistan

Pakistan and Germany have reaffirmed their cooperation in occupational safety and health. This was deepened by the signing of the Dresden Declaration on 8 October 2019. The collaboration between the two countries focuses on the textile and clothing industry. The German Social Accident Insurance is involved in the collaboration.

About a quarter of all workers in Pakistan are employed in the textile and clothing industry. Working conditions are to be improved for them, thus improving safety and health. These objectives are laid down in the Dresden Declaration, which was signed in Islamabad on 8 October 2019 by representatives from the Pakistani government and industry in the presence of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV).

The aim of the cooperation between the two countries is Vision Zero – the vision of a world without work-related accidents and illnesses. The Declaration states that the prevention of fatal and serious accidents at work and occupational diseases should be given the highest priority. The government and the private sector in Pakistan want to work more closely together to achieve this and build a culture of prevention, said Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to the PM for Commerce, Textile, Industry & Production and Investment.

The Declaration is the result of one of the fact-finding visits to Germany organised by GIZ for large Pakistani companies and government officials. The DGUV supports these visits by providing training in the field of prevention. The dialogues are part of the programme for safety in supply chains in the textile industry initiated by the German government.

Web: www.dguv.de > **Webcode:** dp1317523 (German only)

RECOMMENDED

Learning to Walk



Photo: DVR

In 2018, 3,275 people lost their lives in road accidents. Human error is still the greatest risk factor on our roads.

Web: www.runtervomgas.de
(German only)

Nobody should have to learn to walk for a second time in their life! This is the latest message from the 'Slow Down!' road safety campaign run by the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure and the German Road Safety Council. The aim is to raise awareness of the serious consequences of accidents caused by careless driving or overconfidence. In the campaign's current TV commercial, a mother not only helps her child take his first steps as a toddler, but also later in a rehabilitation clinic as he learns to walk for a second time following a serious road accident. The campaign is also running autobahn billboards with slogans such as 'Because the other driver was speeding', 'Because the other driver was distracted' and 'Because the other driver had a beer' to warn against irresponsible driving and its consequences. The new campaign also includes multimedia features on people who have survived serious traffic accidents, who tell their stories in four videos.

NEWS IN BRIEF

German Paralympic Media Award: Entries now open!

Germany's most prestigious media award for disabled sports is celebrating its anniversary. On 22 April 2020, the award will be presented for the 20th time in Berlin. The German Social Accident Insurance presents the awards to outstanding media coverage of inclusion and rehabilitation in disabled sports. The fact that the competition has been so popular for so many years confirms that these topics are gaining in importance in society. The number of entries increases every year and, at the same time, media coverage of major Paralympic sporting events continues to grow.

In 2020, the best news coverage, background articles, interviews and other forms of reporting on sport for people with disabilities will once again be honoured. Entries can be submitted in the categories film/vid-



eo, photo, audio, print, and online platform/social media. In addition, there is a special award for extraordinary commitment to disabled sports. This award is presented by Sir Philip Craven, long-time President of the International Paralympic Committee. The closing date for entries is 13 December 2019.

Web: www.dguv.de/gpma (German only)



25 years of KAN

On 3 and 4 December, the Commission for Occupational Health and Safety and Standardisation (KAN) will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a special event in Berlin. The focus will be on digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

Programme and registration at: www.kan.de

IMPORTANT DATES

3 December 2019
Future Workshop
#Arbeitswelt 2025
ERFURT
www.bmas.de

5 December 2019
Conference: 'Digitalisation and Health Promotion: Focus on mHealth'
BERLIN
www.bvpraevention.de

12-13 March 2020
DGUV Symposium: 'Prevention and Health Promotion in Schools'
DGUV AKADEMIE DRESDEN
www.dguv.de > **Webcode:** dp1317519

NUMBER OF THE MONTH

24,997

... training events for workplace safety and health were organised by the German Social Accident Insurance institutions in 2018.

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