



TOP STORY

What comes next with corona?

Companies and educational institutions must continue to take protective measures

Every week restrictions are being lifted, more and more areas of life are opening up again. But life the way it was before corona is still not on the cards. Companies and educational institutions will most likely have to keep revised OSH standards in place for some time yet in order to ensure work is safe and healthy. That is why it is so important for standards to apply equally to everyone.

The single nationwide SARS-CoV-2 OSH Standard published in April has made it possible to work safely and healthily in spite of the pandemic. The standard describes the basic framework conditions under which companies and educational institutions throughout Germany can resume work under pandemic conditions. ‘This common framework increases acceptance and thus the likelihood of reducing viral infections’, said Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of the German Social Accident Insurance. The German social accident insurance institutions for the private and public sectors have tailored the standard for their respective sectors and made them available from a central location. Dr Hussy: ‘Even in regions where the infection rate is currently very low, this OSH standard continues to apply. It is in everyone’s interest that the infection rate remains low and continues to decline, because the situation can change suddenly at any time’.

In order to make it more binding, the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), in conjunction with the OSH committees of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, is currently drawing up a SARS-CoV-2 OSH Code. ‘We are fully behind this project’, stated Dr Hussy, ‘because it creates more clarity and helps companies to implement the standards’. The code will be published shortly.



Photo: Marc – stock.adobe.com

On 4 May 2020, hairdressers were allowed to reopen. They are required to follow certain requirements for hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment.

The SARS-CoV-2 OSH Standard is also the basis for tools and guidance in the education sector, which the German social accident insurance institutions have developed for day-care centres, schools, training establishments and universities. ‘Considering the federal structure and other competent authorities in the education sector, these standards have greater scope for action’, explained Dr Hussy. This means that state-specific regulations produced by the respective ministries and health authorities complement the recommendations. ‘If companies and educational institutions are uncertain and have any questions, they can always contact their social accident insurance institution. More than ever before, workplace protection is health protection,’ stated Dr Hussy.

Web: www.dguv.de/en

FYI

Clever ideas!

What does a culture of prevention have to do with corona? The answer is: a lot, because companies and educational institutions must be more precautionous than ever. This can be achieved by everyone participating actively, by having good communication and by managers acting as role models. The **kommmit**-mensch prevention campaign is providing help with this.

www.kommmitmensch.de



Photo: Jan Röhl

Motivate

Dear Reader,

Especially in times of crisis, it is important that everyone has timely access to important information. As Jürgen Dusel, the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities, describes in the accompanying interview, not everyone has equal access to information.

We have taken Mr Dusel's comment as an opportunity to review our range of barrier-free information and as an incentive to do even better. Inclusion has long been an important issue for social accident insurance, as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also addresses those insured by the German social accident insurance institutions – namely, people who have been injured in an accident at work or who are affected by an occupational disease. But it is also an issue for prevention because workplaces should be designed in such a way that all people – regardless of their limitations – can work in a healthy and safe way. Our 'UN-BRK 2025' strategy continues the path of making inclusion a natural part of everyday life in the social accident insurance system.

There are many contributors and supporters helping to reach this goal, for example our long-standing cooperation with the German Wheelchair Sports Association (DRS), with whom we recently conducted a joint photo campaign called 'Einfach mitmachen' (EN: *Simply Join In!*). The aim of the campaign is to motivate people to follow the current protective measures in place and to act responsibly following the recent loosening of restrictions. I hope we all simply join in!

Dr. Edlyn Höller

Deputy Director General of the DGUV

'Accessibility doesn't have drawbacks, it's a mark of quality'

In the current crisis, it is important to be well informed. Which regulations apply from when and to whom? Where do you have to go if you suspect you are infected? Who is responsible for what? There is a flood of information, but it is often not barrier-free and therefore not accessible to everyone. DGUV Kompakt spoke about this with Jürgen Dusel, the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities.

Mr Dusel, can you describe the tangible effects of the lack of accessible information in the current crisis?

Just think back to the beginning of the pandemic at the start of the year. Every day, there were updates from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) on case numbers, and there was information from the Federal Government on planned measures and how best to protect yourself. Everyone closely followed this news and information and discussed it daily with colleagues, relatives and friends. However, deaf or hard-of-hearing persons were excluded from this because there was no up-to-date information in sign language; or if there was, it was delayed. The RKI was the first to react – mainly because of the protests from the community – and engaged a sign language interpreter at press conferences. A simple and practical solution.

What has to change?

The Federal Government, in particular the Federal Press Office, has already done a lot in terms of barrier-free communication. However, the challenge remains to make information available in real time wherever possible. This also includes television stations transmitting over the parallel broadcast signal for sign language. There's no use having sign language at press conferences but not showing it on television. Also, a lot more needs to be done with regard to providing easy-to-understand German as stipulated by law. People who depend on it may

not have such a large lobby group behind them, but they are just as interested and also have a right to up-to-date information. This not only applies to people who have a learning difficulty. For example, people with a refugee background, who are only just learning German, also benefit from it. Barrier-free communication is a decisive characteristic of an inclusive society.

At the end of May, the 2019 annual report was submitted to the Arbitration Board, located on your premises, as per the Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities Act. Around 10 percent of the applications submitted concern communication. Can you give us some examples?

Submissions related to the field of communication and information frequently concerned the digital accessibility of websites and apps. In addition, the lack of accessible information on current topics or on research reports and projects of federal public bodies was also criticised. Other submissions related to a lack of sign language or written interpretation at public events, and correspondence in administrative procedures that was difficult to understand.

You are calling on public administrations to step up their efforts to achieve full accessibility. Where do you see the most obstacles?

The basic problem is that accessibility is often an afterthought; for example, building



Photo: Henning Schacht

Jürgen Dusel has been the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities since May 2018. The motto of his term of office is 'Democracy needs inclusion'.

an IT infrastructure but not including accessibility from the very start. In the construction sector, if you first built a house and only afterwards made it barrier-free, this would be laborious, expensive and senseless. I assume, however, that this is rarely the result of ill intentions. The demands and challenges that public administrations face today are enormous. The lack of skilled workers in the IT sector creates more than a few obstacles. Nevertheless, more must be invested in this area, because this is also vital for the sustainability of our society. Accessibility doesn't have drawbacks, it's a mark of quality – especially in the digital sector. However, there has to be significantly more awareness of this.

You've remarked that the current crisis also offers an opportunity to promote an inclusive society. How can this be achieved?

We've seen how much creative potential the pandemic has released, and all of a sudden things are possible that previously would have taken months to implement. Just think

about digitalisation, barrier-free communication, and working from home. I also feel that the solidarity shown by society has been second to none. However, we must be careful not to risk this all again. I've been watching how currently everything is being done to restore the pre-pandemic status quo. This is certainly desirable in many areas, but not in all. We should use this turning point as an opportunity to rethink and reflect on what is important for our society: How is our health system organised? What is the pay like for workers in healthcare, education and social services? What is the ratio of paid to unpaid care work. The pandemic has raised many questions, especially with regard to people who were previously disadvantaged and who are now threatened with being completely cut off – people with disabilities, homeless people, refugees, women and children threatened by violence. It is therefore important not to forget the progress and developments made during the first phase of the pandemic, but to develop them further. We will then have a good chance of an inclusive and resilient society in every regard.

TOPIC

Risk of cancer for firefighters

Are firefighters exposed to an increased risk of cancer as a result of their job? This is the question being investigated by the DGVU's 'Fire Brigades, Emergency Services, Fire Protection' Expert Committee, the Institute for Prevention and Occupational Medicine of the DGVU (IPA), and several other partners as part of a research project. The results of the pilot study show that personal protective equipment (PPE) fulfils its purpose if hygiene rules are observed.

Contamination levels were measured before and after firefighting operations at around 200 fire departments in Berlin and Hamburg. Fire smoke contains carcinogenic substances such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These and other pollutants can enter the body not only via the respiratory tract, but also via the skin and digestive tract. However, many firefighters are not aware of these risks. This is the first study of its kind in the German-speaking world.

One of the first findings from the study is that PPE (in this case, firefighting clothing) fulfils its purpose, but that the correct hygiene measures and cleaning are important for this. Fire brigades and local authorities are being helped with this in a new explanatory video and a brochure on emergency site hygiene. In the long term, the aim is to prevent occupational diseases or those resulting from voluntary firefighting. A final assessment will only be possible after the main study has been completed, because only a small number of case studies were included in the pilot study.

In Germany, there are around 25,000 volunteer fire brigades and about 800 company-run fire brigades. They are all covered by the social accident insurance system. There are a further 100 professional fire brigades with about 40,000 civil servants, who are supported by volunteer fire brigades when needed.

Web: www.forum.dguv.de >

Alle Ausgaben > 1/2020 (German only)

Web: www.dguv.de > **Webcode:** d1182794 (German only)

The Changing World of Work 2020



Figures with added value – the graphics from the brochure can be downloaded individually and used as long as the source is cited.

The latest edition of the brochure 'The Changing World of Work: Figures – Data – Facts', published by the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), provides information on trends, key issues and context in occupational safety and health. The brochure contains information on working hours, working conditions, occupational diseases, work-related accidents and commuting accidents. It comes with compact and easy-to-understand infographics, supplemented by numbers on demographics and employment. The bro-

chure is a quick introduction to the various topics.

Occupational safety and health – it provides facts and arguments, but also aims to stimulate reflection on areas such as future developments in your own company. The topics of management responsibility, retirement age or the economic costs of incapacity for work are also relevant. The brochure can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format (German only).

Web: www.baua.de > Service > Publications

NEWS IN BRIEF

Campaign: 'Together.Against.Corona'

Keep your distance, wear a mask, wash your hands – everyone should 'simply join in'. The German Wheelchair Sports Association (DRS) and the German social accident insurance system recently launched the 'Together.Against.Corona' poster campaign as part of the **kommmitmensch** prevention campaign. The campaign features sportspeople in wheelchairs who are committed to following simple rules of conduct in the fight against COVID-19, thus demonstrating solidarity during the crisis. The initiative is intended to encourage people to set an example regardless of their own personal difficulties or adversities. The campaign poster featuring all participants is available for download from the DRS website.

Web: www.drs.org
www.kommmitmensch.de > Aktuelles



He's 'simply joining in': Philip-Baah Opong, sports therapist at the BG Hospital Hamburg and DRS trainer

INQA: new website and podcast series

The revamped website of the New Quality of Work Initiative offers more services for companies and employees. It is also providing information in new formats; for example, the podcast series 'INQA work week – the podcast on the world of work during Corona'.

Web: www.inqa.de



Photo: luckybusiness – stock.adobe.com

IMPORTANT DATES

Due to the current protective restrictions, all events and seminars hosted by the DGUV and its institutions have been postponed or cancelled.

For the latest information, visit:
www.dguv.de > Webcode: d16654
(German only)

NUMBER OF THE MONTH

31,936

... reportable bicycle accidents occurred on the way to or from work in 2018. 15 of these accidents were fatal.

Source: DGUV

LEGAL INFORMATION

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