

**RIAL COOPERATION FUND OF THE IACML OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF AMERICAN STATES**

**On-site visit to the Ministry of Labour and Immigration of Barbados
Bridgestone, October 5-9, 2009**

Study Tour by the Labour Occupational Safety and Health Officers of Guyana to the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, Barbados

BACKGROUND

Guyana, because of limited resources, took a decision in 2006 to merge the functions of the Labour Officer and the Occupational Safety and Health Officer. This took effect in 2007. The Department lost some of its experts in occupational safety and health, and several of the new staff had little or no exposure in the area. It is on this premise that the Government of Guyana sought to expose, as much as it can, the staff of the Labour Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Department to additional training. The Government embarked on an in house training programme and also sought the assistance of the international community in this regard. Through the RIAL Cooperation fund assistance was given in 2008 for a study tour to Trinidad and Tobago and in 2009 to Barbados.

On October 5, 2009 five (5) Labour Occupational Safety and Health Officers departed Guyana for Barbados courtesy of RIAL which provided full sponsorship. This visit was for five (5) days duration ending October 9, 2009.

The aim of this program was the strengthening of occupational safety and health in Guyana.

OVERVIEW

The training program was opened with brief remarks made by Mr. Vincent Burnett, Chief Labour Officer (ag.), (Barbados), Mr. Clive Nurse, Deputy Chief Labour, Occupational Safety &

Health Officer, (Guyana) and Mrs. Claudette Hope-Greenidge, Asst. Chief Labour Officer (ag.), (Barbados). Following the ceremony, a courtesy call was made to the Permanent Secretary (ag.) of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration who expressed her appreciation for Barbados having been chosen to host and share their best practices with Guyana.

I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

DAY 1

The Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Legislations of both countries were presented after which a discussion ensued.

Their labour laws and related legislations were examined by the participants with both Ms. Greene and Ms. Hinds spearheading this session. It was noted that the Guyana legislation covers inspections at all workplaces whilst Barbados legislations were restricted only to factories. However, it was indicated by the Barbados participants that a new “*Safety and Health at Workplace Act 2005*”, which covers all workplaces, was approved by Parliament and awaits the assent of the Prime Minister.

Ms. Kerryann Branford’s presentation on “*Monitoring and Enforcement of Occupational Safety and Health Provisions*” highlighted the responsibilities of Officers and outlined methods used to enforce the Safety and Health legislation. She noted the level of compliance of the Safety and Health mechanisms in Barbados to that of Convention 155 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Ms. Gloria Alleyne, Clerical Officer demonstrated the procedure for the Department’s Filing System and use of data.

The final presentation, which was done by Mr. Clive Nurse, Deputy Chief Labour, Occupational Safety & Health Officer, focused on the Inspection Database of Guyana. It outlined the nature and scope of the database and its use for Labour administration in general and inspections in particular.

DAY 2

The participants visited the Arawak Cement Company Limited, located at Checker Hall, St. Lucy. The Company's Human Resources Manager briefed us on visitors' safety procedures and the plant's operations. Mr. Deryek Green, Safety and Environmental Officer, spoke on the Behaviour Accident Prevention Plan, which was recently implemented at the worksite.

Ms. Janice Springer, Safety Nurse, gave insights into the medical certification programme existing at the company, whereby there are pre and post testing of employees to ensure that they are not exposed to hazards they may interface with daily.

The tour guide, Mr. James Walker, outlined the operations of the company and the safety programme in place. This programme consists of a safety committee with the majority of members being junior staff. Safety concerns identified by the committee are conveyed to management by Mr. Green and action is taken within a given time frame. No staff is exempted from disciplinary action.

Some hazards noted at Arawak Cement Company are exposure to heat, dust, chemicals and high heights.

The final activity was the "*Use of Measuring Equipment*" which was done by Ms. Allison Elcock, Senior Safety and Health Officer and Mr. Darwin Braithwaite, Safety and Health Officer. Several pieces of industrial scientific testing equipment were seen and practical demonstrations were given.

Among the equipment displayed were Sound Level Meters, Thermo hygrometers (Heat and Cold), the Light Meter, Distance Meter, Fume Pump and Wind Meter.

DAY 3

A review of the previous day's activities was done. Best practices were highlighted and notable breaches identified were discussed.

Mrs. Allison Elcock did a presentation on "*Occupational Hygiene Principles and Practices*", which focused on Anticipation, Recognition, Evaluation and Control of physical hazards (noise, lighting, temperature), chemical hazards (solid, liquid, gases, dust, mist) biological hazards (bacteria, fungi, viruses) and Ergonomics. Also outlined were factors to consider in determining whether to take a sample or not, why sampling was important, limitations, where to sample, how to sample, monitoring techniques etc.

"*Ergonomic in Industrial and Non-Industrial Settings*" was presented by Ms. Nia Salankey, Safety and Health Officer. She defined the term Ergonomics and identified physical, environmental and psycho-social risk factors. She further identified the main types of work station designs some requirements.

The participants also visited the Mount Gay Distillery, located at Brandons, St. Michael. The main objective was to conduct scientific testing on Physical and Chemical Hazards in the processing areas. The equipment used during this exercise were the Sound Level Meter, Air Quality Meter, Light Meter, Wind Meter and Temperature Meter.

DAY 4

Participants gave feedback on the previous day's sessions. Mr. Trevor King, Senior Environmental Officer, made a presentation on "*Asbestos Identification and Removal*". The presentation defined and identified the main types of asbestos, the properties of asbestos, health hazards associated with asbestos and asbestos abatement, removal, disposal and transport.

Dr. Morris a member of Barbados National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health dealt with "*Occupational Diseases*". Dr. Morris defined what Occupational Diseases are

and gave an international perspective on the topic. He highlighted the treatment from an Occupational Health perspective. This was followed by a Case study.

DAY 5

An evaluation was done of the previous day's activities, this being moderated by Ms. Claudette Hope-Greenidge. A presentation by Mr. Trevor Blackman, Safety and Health Officer on "*Accident Investigation Techniques*" and discussions on preparations for visiting the scene, inspection, gathering evidence and determining root causes followed.

Significant areas outlined in the presentation were the 4P's: People Evidence, Position Evidence, Paper Evidence and Part Evidence. Three case studies were also presented and the participants were tasked with the responsibility of identifying breaches and making necessary recommendations with respect to same.

Finally, there was a closing session and each participant evaluated the programme and submitted their recommendations to the Barbados Ministry of Labour Department.

2. MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The most important lessons learnt from the Barbados experience were in the areas of:-

1. Industrial Hygiene Principals and Practices:-

Use of Scientific Testing Equipment (mainly for noise, dust, light, wind, fumes and temperature)
Since Guyana is in the process of replacing equipment, the use of these were of particular interest, especially with regards to the wind meter and the fumes meters which were new to the participants from Guyana. Each participant was given the opportunity to operate at least two of the equipment to test for the relevant hazard. This was done at the Occupational Safety and Health Department and at the Mount Gay Distillery. The testing at the Mount Gay Distillery

provided the participants with the opportunity to test for light quality, noise level, temperature, and air quality among other things.

2. Asbestos Identification and Removal:-

Asbestos is the name given to naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals. The types of asbestos include chrysotile (white asbestos), amosite (brown asbestos) and crocidolite (blue asbestos). Asbestos may be combined with a material that binds its fibers together, producing asbestos containing material.

When Asbestos becomes a risk:

The greatest risks arise from asbestos when it is in the particle form and is airborne.

Exposure to asbestos fibers poses a health hazard and must be prevented by dust control and the use of devices to guard against inhalation of the fibers.

That apart, the participants were instructed on the health effects associated with inhalation or ingestion of asbestos fibers, such as lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma.

Participants were given the guidelines for the removal and disposal of Asbestos as employed by the Barbados government.

3. Accident Investigation Techniques:-

The preparation for investigating accidents as it relates to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)'s and equipment to take along was a timely refresher of the need to be readily equipped for the task ahead. This entails obtaining a copy of the initial report, consulting the office files for work place history, selecting the appropriate PPE for investigation to use, based on the nature of the site to be visited, seeking directions to the location, and getting assistance from support agencies,

e.g. police, if necessary. The appropriate equipment must also be selected for the particular investigation.

One area that was particularly interesting to the participants from Guyana was the method of gathering evidence using the 4P's model which involves the People Evidence, Paper Evidence, Position Evidence and the Preservation of records. This is particularly significant when prosecution is pursued against delinquent employers.

Also of particular interest was the determination of the root causes of the accident using the Casual Factor Analysis. Root cause analysis is defined as the underlying reason or real cause for a problem. Root cause analysis is a tool for identifying accident prevention strategies.

4. Occupational Diseases:-

An occupational disease is defined as illness, disease, or disability developed as a result of some work-related exposure or activity.

This topic was very wide but was expertly presented by the facilitator. It exposed participants to the potential hazards in the workplace that may cause Occupational Diseases, the criteria for diagnosis and the principles of prevention of ill health by way of substitution, protection and monitoring.

Highlighted also were the five (5) risk assessments, namely: (i) identifying the hazards, (ii) deciding who might be harmed and how, (iii) evaluating the risks and deciding on precaution, (iv) record findings and (v) reviewing the assessment and update, if necessary.

Risk takes into account the likelihood to cause harm and the severity of the harmful effect. Central to the process of identifying and determining risk, are field work and walk through surveys at workplaces.

Lessons that are useful and can be replicated in Guyana are:

1. The use of scientific equipment is necessary to highlight and confirm the instances where hazards in the workplace are beyond the accepted or legal limits. Much more emphasis will be placed on the usefulness of this practice which must form part of the LOSH officer's inspection kit. Exposure to the use of both wind and fumes meters were entirely new and needs to be utilized in Guyana in the appropriate sectors.
2. The many forms of asbestos and the asbestos containing materials, while not easily identifiable, the information pertaining to the identification can be utilized to make a physical assessment with a view of having tests done to subsequently ascertain the veracity.
3. The guidelines for the removal and eventual disposal of Asbestos materials can be replicated along with the identification of a particular disposal area for the asbestos. This is necessary since many vagrants do visit the regular disposal sites and can be exposed to asbestos fibers if that site is used.
4. The gathering of evidence through the use of the 4P's model can also be adopted in Guyana. This involves basically looking for People Evidence, Paper Evidence, Position Evidence and Preservation of Records. This certainly gives more structure to evidence gathering.
5. Determining the root cause using the Casual Factor Analysis allows for a more effective and detailed analysis of accidents since it allows not only for a post investigation but also for the determination of factors which might have caused or are likely to cause accidents with a view of eliminating same. This will be useful to Guyana in the occupational safety and health drive in the workplaces.
6. The Risk assessment process is also a useful approach to hazards in the workplace and will be replicated. This is, no doubt, an ideal way to determine what one is

3. NEXT STEPS

The information received would be utilized by the Ministry in improving methods and systems of work, and adopting some of the best practices of the Barbados Safety Department.

It will foster the thrust of Guyana to further develop our occupational safety and health program.

4. EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives and expectations of the training program were met as was outlined in the programme. The theoretical and practical sessions gave insights into procedures and methods which can be adopted by the Labour Occupational Safety and Health Inspectors. Hence, the Guyana contingent was better able to relate with the safety and health issues and similarly our Barbados counterparts.

Recommendations:

1. There is need for more Regional Networking among the agencies with the responsibility of fostering occupational safety and health. This may be also through teleconferencing, emailing and other communications.
2. A return of experts from Barbados should be arranged to expose the other inspectors.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, much knowledge was gained from this visit. The merger of the Labour and Occupational Safety and Health Departments of Guyana necessitated the exposure of some staff to the occupational safety and health aspects of the program. This was, no doubt, met through this training program which additionally sought to strengthen the OSH of the participating countries.

The lessons learnt will be readily implemented to improve the effectiveness of the LOSH Department. For example, risk assessment, causal factor analysis, use of wind and fumes meters.

Our counterparts in Barbados were exposed to the Occupational Safety and Health legislation of Guyana which repealed a significant portion of the Factories Act and therefore provides for inspections in all workplaces. While Barbados functions under the very restrictive Factories Act which does not provide the scope to inspect all workplaces, a new piece of Occupation Safety and Health legislation is on the table and will be implemented shortly so that Barbados will be on par with Guyana.

Of interest to the Barbados delegation was the inspection database which is in place here and which covers all aspects of the labour administration generally, and inspections in particular.

This program culminated a series of such visits which sought to strengthen OSH and allowed for all, but two, of our officers to have experienced this type of overseas training where they were exposed to what is being done by our counterparts in other territories.

The participants hereby express their sincere gratitude to the RIAL and the OAS for their financial assistance in making this training a reality and to the Labour and Occupational Safety and Health Departments of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration of Barbados for hosting us from October 5th -9th, 2009. In addition, The Delegation thanks all the facilitators

and staff who provided transportation to and from the hotel on a daily basis, and all others who contributed to the success of the program.

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Clive Nurse

Deputy Chief

Labour Occupational Safety and Health Officer