



CORONA PANDEMIC
‘Workplace protection
is health protection’
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TOP STORY

Transparency and sound advice

Survey of insured persons on the Occupational Disease Procedure

Every year, around 75,000 reports of a suspected occupational disease are filed, which trigger the Occupational Diseases Procedure. How satisfied are insured persons with this procedure? How much does formal recognition or dismissal of a disease by the procedure affect their level of satisfaction? The German social accident insurance institutions conducted a survey of their insured members. The result of the representative survey is that overall satisfaction is high, but communication, transparency and processing time need to be further improved.

Satisfaction levels of insured persons is an important quality criterion for the Occupational Disease Procedure. In order to continuously improve the procedure, all of the German social accident insurance institutions for the private sector and six institutions for the public sector carried out a survey of insured persons who were informed of the decision regarding an occupational disease in the first half of 2017. More than 24,000 questionnaires were sent out for the survey, and the response rate was 19 percent. Overall, the results showed a high level of satisfaction, with two out of three insured persons satisfied with their procedure. ‘This shows the procedure is well accepted as a whole’, said Dr Edlyn Höller, Deputy Director General of the DGUV. However, satisfaction decreases if a suspected occupational disease is not confirmed. ‘It’s understandable that the outcome of the procedure has an influence on the level of satisfaction. This makes it even more important that decisions are transparent for insured persons and that they are well advised and informed’, stressed Höller.

The individual components of the survey show a very mixed picture. The best rating was given to ‘Quality of service and consultation/friendliness’. Four out of five insured persons gave a good rating to the employees of the social accident insurance in-



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A recent customer satisfaction survey has provided valuable information on how to further improve the Occupational Disease Procedure.

stitutions. At the other end of the scale is ‘Processing time’. Only around three out of five insured persons are satisfied with this aspect. Ratings for ‘Transparency of the procedure’ shows that the criteria that led to formal recognition or dismissal of an occupational disease were not clear to a full quarter of insured persons. ‘We need to make improvements here by providing better information in a timely manner, by reducing the time taken for the procedure, and by increasing transparency with regard to the legal basis for decision-making’, stated Höller. The last point is already being addressed in the current legislative procedure for further developing occupational disease legislation: improving transparency and speeding up the processes which lead to the inclusion of an illness on the List of Occupational Diseases. These proposals were developed by the Self-government Committee of the German Social Accident Insurance and were presented in the White Paper ‘Occupational Diseases Legislation 2016’.

Web: www.dguv-forum.de (Edition 1/2020, German only)

FYI Occupational Disease Procedure

The procedure covers the entire process: reporting a suspected occupational disease; ascertaining all relevant circumstances such as work history, harmful work activities and medical assessments; and making a legally binding decision as to whether or not it constitutes an officially recognised occupational disease.

Web: www.dguv.de

› **Webcode:** e39304



Photo: Jan Röhl / DGUV

Be patient

Dear Reader,

The corona pandemic has affected us all on an unforeseen scale. The initial impact is still being felt, but the full consequences for our society have yet to be fully understood. Everyone is affected in some way, whether it be concerns about their own health or that of their relatives, about their livelihood or job, or about gaps in their children's education. These are just a few examples, but they show that this crisis is having a profound effect on all our lives.

There have been many restrictions imposed on us recently and the economy has suffered a considerable setback. Easing of restrictions has cautiously begun, but this will only work if everyone adheres to the rules. This applies to both our working and everyday lives. As Germany's provider of social accident insurance, we want to make it possible for people to have safe and healthy working conditions under these difficult circumstances. We work towards this goal every single day. However, there probably will not be a normal everyday life like we knew before the pandemic for a long time to come. The growing lack of patience is understandable, but as hard as it often might seem to tolerate these adverse circumstances, containing the pandemic will take time. Social distancing and hygiene precautions will continue to be a part of our lives. Together we will overcome this test of our patience. So, please keep a safe distance and stay healthy!

Dr Stefan Hussy
Director General of the DGUV

'Workplace protection is health protection'

The coronavirus pandemic is creating enormous challenges for companies and educational institutions. The SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Safety and Health Standard paves the way for the economy to return to normal. DGUV Kompakt spoke with Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of the German Social Accident Insurance about how the German social accident insurance institutions are supporting companies and institutions during the crisis.

Dr Hussy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) adopted the SARS-CoV-2 OSH standard on 16 April. What role does Germany's statutory accident insurance system play in this?

We welcome the fact that the OSH standard provides a uniform approach across all of Germany. Policymakers are placing great importance on occupational safety and health in the current crisis – workplace protection is health protection! We now have a standard that sets out how to work safely and healthily under pandemic conditions and which is binding on all businesses throughout Germany. To complement the national standard, the social accident insurance institutions have developed industry-specific information and guidelines for companies and institutions. Where necessary, the DGUV is responsible for across-the-board coordination in order to divide the work up in the best possible way and minimise any duplications, gaps or even contradictions in terms of quality assurance. In view of the fact that restrictions are starting to ease at short notice in many sectors, this continues to represent a major challenge.

What other support is available?

From the very start of the crisis, the social accident insurance institutions have been advising and supporting companies and, increasingly, educational institutions. They have been drawing on their sector-specific know-how and have been working closely with the OSH authorities of the federal states within the framework of the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy. We provide information on pandemic planning, on protec-

tive measures and hygiene measures, and on changes to organising occupational safety and health, such as when working from home. Risk assessment plays an important role. But it is also about questions regarding insurance protection or support for managers. New materials are being developed almost daily, because of the many questions being asked; for example, questions about the reimbursement of costs, the binding nature of the rules, or how these differ from other regulations.

Where do businesses and institutions find this information?

All of the German social accident insurance institutions have put up sector-specific information and contact lists on their websites. The DGUV website is the central entry point for this information, some of which is also available in other languages and an easy-to-understand format. Some accident insurance institutions have set up telephone hotlines. I would encourage all companies and educational institutions to contact their social accident insurance institution with any questions they may have.

Some businesses have run into economic difficulties as a result of the crisis.

What can they do if they cannot pay their statutory accident insurance contributions at the moment?

Once a member company has received its annual contributions notification, it can contact the relevant social accident insurance institution directly. The accident insurance institutions for the private sector are offering companies in financial difficulties the ability to adjust their contribu-



Photo: myboys.me – stock.adobe.com

In addition to other general protective measures, washing hands is a simple and effective hygiene measure that has had to become routine during the corona pandemic. This also applies to young children, for example in day-care centres and primary schools.

tion payments. We want to ease the burden as much as possible, for example by paying in instalments or by deferring payments. The accident insurance institutions have developed tailored solutions for the various sectors. We are also in talks with the BMAS about temporary relief from bureaucratic formalities. One example is extending deadlines for safety briefings.

In what other areas is the social accident insurance system still involved in crisis management?

One example would be the BG Hospitals, which, like many other clinics and hospitals in Germany, are also setting aside capacity for treating infected patients. As clinics specialised in the acute care of accident victims and people with occupational diseases, these clinics have extensive experience in emergency treatment. Another example is the rapid test for determining whether a respiratory mask is suitable for the pandemic. To alleviate the acute shortage of European-approved products in the short term, the European Commission has approved the use of rapid tests. The Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance (IFA) has developed such a rapid test. The test method has met with great interest from manufacturers and importers.

Schools and day-care centres are also gradually reopening. What are the unique challenges here?

Not only do teachers and staff in educational institutions have to follow the rules, they also have to make sure that they practice these with their children and young adults. There are also organisational issues, such as splitting up groups and classes, working out schedules or controlling access to school buildings. This is a significant amount of effort in addition to the actual teaching work. Some staff are not available because they belong to the high-risk group. There's a lot of unanswered questions. The social accident insurance institutions for the federal states provide advice and support to these educational facilities. We have published guidelines for day-care centres, schools and universities that help to make everyday life safe and healthy for everyone. However, it's also obvious that the information isn't complete or definitive, because things change almost on a daily basis. In addition, state-specific regulations issued by the relevant ministries and health authorities supplement these recommendations. There is no single nationwide regulation like there is for the business world.

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

Web: www.kommitmensch.de (German only)

TOPIC

Learning from the crisis

Social security systems play an important role in containing and combating the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) conducted a survey among its members to find out what social security measures have been implemented.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused major challenges for all European countries. There are significant differences in how countries have handled the outbreak of the pandemic and the social security measures they have consequently put in place. The survey focused on measures implemented at national level, as well as cross-border situations. What are the priorities of each country?

What do they have in common and what are the major differences? The overview shows that posted workers and frontier workers are one of the high priority areas. These people have been especially affected by border closures. Better access to authorities as well as simpler and faster access to services are a feature of many of the measures implemented. Individuals and companies should be helped as quickly as possible during the crisis in order to alleviate the economic consequences. This includes offering relief for the payment of social security contributions. Other initiatives focus on ensuring a healthy work-life balance by providing assistance such as additional financial support or extra days off. The overview is being constantly updated.

ESIP is a strategic platform that brings together over 50 national social security organisations. It covers various areas of social security, including health, pensions, family and social integration, disability and rehabilitation, and unemployment. The association was founded in 1996.

Web: www.esip.eu > News

RECOMMENDED

DGUV Forum in new format



Individual articles or entire issues can be easily read, sent, quoted or downloaded as PDF files.

Web: www.dguv-forum.de (German only)

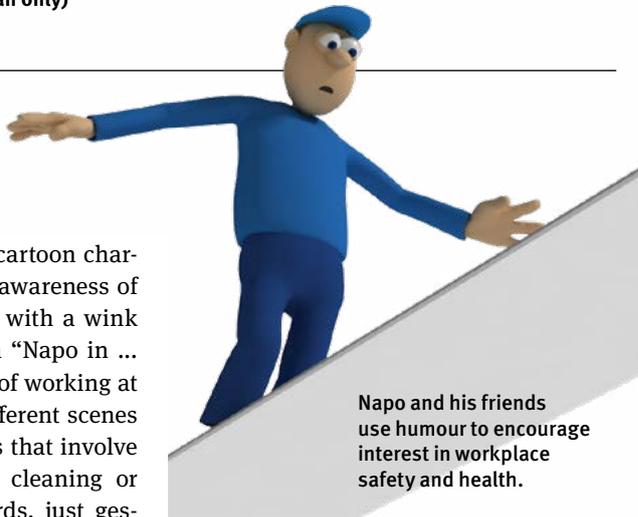
DGUV Forum, the specialist journal for Germany's social accident insurance system, has been available exclusively online as an e-Magazine since March. The mobile-friendly and accessible design makes it easier to read on mobile devices and meet the requirements of a modern technical journal. The magazine has also been improved in terms of content with a greater focus on research and innovations in the field of statutory accident insurance. Thus, DGUV Forum addresses not only employees of Germany's social accident insurance institutions, but also OSH specialists as well as others with an interest in OSH from universities, social courts, ministries and OSH authorities. Ten issues are published per year. These are available for free. Anyone interested in DGUV Forum can subscribe to an email notification, so they never miss an issue.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Napo aims high

For more than 20 years, the cartoon character Napo has been raising awareness of workplace safety and health with a wink and a smile. In the new film "Napo in ... work at height", the dangers of working at height are discussed. Ten different scenes show various work situations that involve risks, for example, window cleaning or roof work. There are no words, just gestures and facial expressions, making it internationally understandable. The films encourage discussion about aspects of workplace safety and offer practical solutions or show the way to achieve them.

In another episode, Napo also does his bit for the current situation by showing how quickly viruses spread and how one



Napo and his friends use humour to encourage interest in workplace safety and health.

of the ways to reduce this happening is by frequent handwashing. Napo is a joint project of the DGUV and six other European occupational safety institutions.

Web: www.napofilm.net/de > Napo's films

From pandemic planning to teleworking

The **kommmit**mensch prevention campaign provides information on current topics such as protective measures against infections, pandemic planning, managing staff remotely and working from home. On the **kommmit**mensch website, companies and employees can find helpful information, materials and tools.

Web: www.kommmitmensch.de (German only)



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

65.9 %

... of insured persons who were involved in the Occupational Disease Procedure were satisfied with the procedure overall. This is one of the findings from a survey of insured persons conducted by the German social accident institutions in the first half of 2017.

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Publishing committee: Dr Renate Colella (Chair), Udo Diel, Dominique Dressler, Professor Dr med Axel Ekkernkamp, Markus Hofmann, Gabriele Pappai, Dr Udo Schöpf, Karl-Sebastian Schulte
Editorship: Gregor Doepke, Kathrin Baltscheit, DGUV, Glinkastr. 40, 10117 Berlin
Editorial team: Kathrin Baltscheit, Diana Grupp, Katharina Braun, Anne Schattmann

Translation: Peter Love
Layout: Christoph Schmid, www.christophschmid.com
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Contact

KOMPACT@DGUV.DE
WWW.DGUV.DE/KOMPACT