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**Department of Labour**

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**Chief Directorate of Occupational Health and Safety**

## **INTRODUCTION**

As the name of the regulation indicates, the General Administrative Regulations determines the administrative procedure of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This procedure was not placed in the Act itself owing to the fact that changes can be made to a Regulation with greater ease than that of a Section in the Act. A change to a Section of the Act needs to be passed by parliament whereas the Minister of the relevant Department can approve a change in a Regulation.

The General Administrative Regulations, as is the case with all other regulations, is an extension of the Act and should therefore be seen as a complete unit.

Terms, which were previously defined in the Act, are not redefined in the Regulations. If a specific definition does not appear in the Regulations, then it should be available in Section 1 of the Act.

## **DEFINITIONS**

All new phrases as well as words (expressions and words which differ from the standard dictionary definitions) that are used in this regulation, which have not been defined in the Act, will be defined in this regulation. Where the Act or regulation refers to "mean" the definition in the Act or regulation must be considered and where there's reference made to "It Includes" definition from the Act and regulation including the oxford dictionary must be considered

## **ACCESS TO PREMISES**

It is prohibited for an employer to refuse an inspector entry to perform his or her function because an inspector is entitled by the law to enter employer's workplace.

Employer should always ensure that inspectors are accompanied by a person who has knowledge and experience of the activities and safety requirements of the workplace

## **EXEMPTIONS**

Any exemption, which has been granted to any person shall be signed by the Chief Inspector of the Department of Labour. An person who wishes to apply for an exemption should forward his/her application to the office of the Chief Inspector in Pretoria. The application for exemption should indicate proof that the health and safety of persons who are likely to be affected by the exemption will not be prejudiced in consequences of it. Health and safety

representatives and committees must be consulted during the whole process and given time to comment.

## **COPY OF THE ACT**

Employees together with employers have certain duties and rights, which have been assigned to them in terms of the Act. In order to comply with the provisions of the Act and regulations, each employee must have access to a copy of the Act. This regulation requires that—

- (a) Each employer with 5 or more employees shall have a copy of at least one Act, which will be made readily available for perusal by the employee. Owing in the fact that a workplace can be made up of a very large area, and that the legislator did not intend to be unreasonable, various concessions are made. For example, a meter-reader in the town of Brits' workplace is the Municipal area of Brits. In such a case it is expected that a copy of the Act be made available at the point where the employee reports for duty in the morning, or any other suitable position as agreed upon with the employer.
- (b) Each employer with less than 5 employees, shall, if requested provide a copy of the Act for perusal by the employees. This includes farm workers and domestic servants.

The copy of the Act may be an electronic reproduction or from a library. The Act and Regulations are amended from time to time, and it is therefore important to remember that one must obtain a copy of the latest amendments to keep up to date with the current legislation.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES**

The Health and Safety committees are made up of all the Health and Safety Representatives together with an equal amount of employer appointee representatives to represent the employer (there can be more than one committee to avoid a large congregation of representatives). If more than two committees are established, each health and safety representative must be member of at least one of the committees. These committees are the point around which self-regulation revolves.

Employer should provide necessary equipment, facilities and stationary required by the committee in order them to perform their functions.

It is important to keep the records of the meeting as they can be used as evidence for action taken to eliminate hazards and vice versa

## **NEGOTIATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS BEFORE DESIGNATION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES**

The regulation prescribe the items which must be agreed upon during negotiations between the employer and employees representatives. If a dispute arises between the employees and employers or his authorised representative, the matter should be referred for arbitration. Both parties shall submit a statement within a prescribed period to both the arbitrator and the other party concerned.

The statement is to contain the following information:

- (a) The proposal for the arrangements and procedures for the nomination of the Health and Safety Representatives.
- (b) The decision which is sought.

The arbitrator should then:

- (a) Determine when and where the arbitration procedure shall be held. The arbitration may be held in the absence of the party who failed to submit a statement to the arbitrator and other party;
- (b) Determine whether a pre-hearing conference shall be held;
- (c) Determine which arbitration procedures shall be followed;
- (d) Determine the procedures for the admission of evidence;
- (e) Determine the admissibility of hearsay evidence; and
- (f) Determine other relevant procedural matters.

In terms of Section 17(2) of the Act both parties are to come to a decision within 14 days as to who the arbitrator shall be. If no decision can be made, the president of the Labour Court is to be notified in writing. The president of the Labour Court in consultation with the Chief Inspector shall appoint an arbitrator, whose decision shall be final. This arbitrator will be entitled to receive remuneration as is payable to an additional member of the Labour Court.

## **DESIGNATION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES**

The employer must designate Health and Safety Representatives as follows:

- Shops and offices— one for up to 100 employees; and
- Workplaces other than shops and offices— one for up to 50 employees.

The employer shall ensure that employees designated as health and safety representatives meet the following requirements:

- Employed in a full-time capacity in the specific workplace or section thereof;

- Acquainted with conditions and activities at that workplace or section thereof, and
- Taking into account the nature of hazards associated with the activities of the workplace or section thereof, the employer shall provide as far as is reasonable practicable health and safety training to the health and safety representatives on how to identify health and safety risks and how to conduct inspections of the workplace or section thereof.

## **REPORTING OF INCIDENTS AND OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES**

Section 24 of the Act refers to certain incidents occurring at the workplace, or in connection with the use of machinery whereby a person dies or is injured to be extent where he is likely to die or could have resulted in a major incident. Such incidents should be reported to the Provincial Director on a WCL 1 or WCL 2 form within seven days.

Certain other types of incidents must be reported to the Provincial Director telephonically, facsimile or similar means of communication and these types of incidents are as follows—

- (a) Where a person, as a result of the incident;
  - i) Dies;
  - ii) Becomes unconscious;
  - iii) Suffers the loss of a limb or part thereof;
  - iv) Is injured to the extent that he is likely to die;
  - v) Is injured to the extent that he is likely to be permanently disabled;
  - vi) Is injured to the extent that he is likely to be off for a period of 14 days or more;
  - vii) Cannot perform his normal duties (those duties for which he was employed).
- (b) An incident of major consequence arising out of the use of industrial equipment or machinery or industrial practices at a workplace.
- (c) The health and safety of any person is endangered and where –
  - i) A dangerous substance was spilled;
  - ii) The uncontrolled release of any substance under pressure (pressure greater than 1 atmosphere) took place;
  - iii) Machinery or any part thereof fractured or failed, resulting in flying, falling or uncontrolled moving objects; or
  - iv) Machines, which ran out of control.

These incidents should also be recorded and investigated in accordance to Regulation 8 of the General Administrative Regulations.

If an injured person is to die as a result of an incident, which has already been reported in terms of the above, the employer or user should report such death to the Provincial Director.

Any registered medical practitioner should, in terms of Section 25 of the Act, report all (to the employer and Chief Inspector) cases of occupational diseases or any other disease, which he believes arose out of a person's employment, which he/she has treated. This must be done within 14 days in the form of a WCL 22 form.

Any other person may in writing, give notice of any disease suspected to be an occupational disease, to the employer and chief inspector.

## **RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENTS**

The employer or user of machinery should keep record and investigate all incidents referred to in terms of Section 24 of the Act together with any other incident, which resulted in the person concerned having had to receive medical treatment other than first aid.

These incidents must be recorded in the form of Annexure 1 of these regulations and be kept for a period of at least 3 years. This record shall be kept on the premises and available for perusal by an inspector.

The employer, a designated person, a health and safety representative or a member of the health and safety committee must investigate the above-mentioned incidents. This investigation should take place within 7 days from the date of incident and completed as soon as is reasonable practicable or within the contracted period of contract workers. The employer should record the result of the investigation in the Annexure 1. The purpose of the investigation is to establish the cause of the incident together with the safety measures that can be implemented to prevent the re-occurrence of such incidents in the future.

The health and safety committee shall examine this record at their next meeting.

## **WITNESS AT AN INQUIRY**

The chief inspector can, in terms of Section 32, direct an inspector to hold a formal inquiry as a result of an incident reported in terms of Section 24 (refer to Regulation 6). In such an instance, the inspector shall inform the employer or user of machinery of his intentions, and request the following from him/her:

- a) That all persons witness to the incident; and
- b) That any other person as required by the inspector,

be notified in connection with the time, date and venue of the formal inquiry.

The employer or user of machinery is to establish which persons are likely not to attend the inquiry, and shall advise the inspector of the names and addresses of such persons to allow the inspector to subpoena such persons.

**RETURNS**

An employer or user shall furnish the inspector with such information as requested for the purpose of the Administration of the Act.