

* Policies Concerning Measures to be Taken by Employers to Create a Comfortable Work Environment (July 1, 1992) (Ministry of Labour, Health, and Welfare Notification No. 59)

Based on Paragraph 1, Article 71(3) of the Industrial Health and Safety Act (Act No. 57 of June 8, 1972), policies concerning measures to be taken by employers to create a comfortable work environment shall be as follows, and based on the same paragraph, will be publicized.

Policies Concerning Measures to be Taken by Employers to Create a Comfortable Work Environment

The remarkable progress in recent years of technological innovation has brought about great changes in the work environment, and the softening of the economy, as well as the development of the globalization of corporate endeavors and the shift to service industries, have brought about the expansion of workplaces and changes in the employment conditions of individual workers. Recently, due to changes occurring in these kinds of workplaces, stress and fatigue have become new problems for workers.

While still working to make economic wealth a reality, the importance of emotional wealth is overtaking material wealth in the national consciousness, and in the workplace, it has become important to reduce the great physical and mental toll on workers by elevating the concern for health, along with shortening working hours.

Further, the employment structure in Japan shows an increase in the proportion of female workers due to the advances they have made in a wide variety of fields, along with the aging of the workforce, and an increased percentage of middle-aged workers. In light of this situation, and in order to deal with such changes in the employment structure, it has become necessary to try and create an improved workplace.

Amidst these changes, it is extremely important to create a comfortable work environment in order to minimize stress and fatigue in workers who spend many hours at the workplace. Furthermore, it is also believed that creating a more comfortable work environment will allow workers to better exhibit their abilities, which also contributes to the vitality of the workplace.

These policies, based on the concepts provided above, address measures to be taken by employers to create a more comfortable workplace, and contain paragraphs regarding goals about creating a comfortable work environment and items regarding the substance of measures that need to be considered and implemented by employers. In order to appropriately and effectively create a comfortable work environment, we encourage employers to take these voluntary steps, with the aim of thereby contributing to the creation of a more comfortable work environment.

I. Items Concerning Goals to Create a Comfortable Work Environment

It is desirable that the creation of a comfortable work environment be attempted according to the following.

1. Management of the Work Environment

If conditions are inadequate because of air pollution, heat or cold, or insufficient lighting, and if a worker's stress or fatigue rises as a result, *appropriately managing the cause of the worker's discomfort such as airborne dust or foul orders, as well as appropriately*

maintaining the temperature, lighting, etc., necessary for a worker to engage in his or her work.

2. Improving Working Methods

The work that a worker engages with may be accompanied by any sort of physical or mental burden, but in regard to work performed in an unnatural physical position and/or work that requires great strength, *improving working methods in order to reduce the physical and mental burden on the worker*, since the physical and mental strain for the worker is high.

3. Facilities, Equipment Installation and Upkeep for Relieving Worker Fatigue [caused by working]

It is necessary to try and relieve, as quickly as possible, the physical and mental fatigue that results from working. For this reason, *attempting to establish and maintain facilities such as break rooms for the purpose of recuperating from fatigue.*

4. Maintenance of Other Facilities and Equipment

Keeping facilities and equipment that are necessary in the workplace, such as sinks and toilets, in a clean and easy-to-operate condition.

II. Matters Concerning the Substance of Measures to be Taken by Employers to Create a Comfortable Work Environment

1. Measures to Maintain a Comfortable Working Environment

(1) Air environment

In indoor workplaces, *measures to ensure that the air environment is comfortable and free of airborne dust, foul odors, etc, and measures, taken as necessary, against smoking, such as designating smoking areas within the workplace, etc.* Also, for outdoor areas where airborne dust and odors, etc., frequently occur, it is desirable to take necessary measures in order to curb their emission.

(2) Temperature Conditions

In indoor workplaces, *keeping the temperature and humidity, etc., at a comfortable level, depending on the season and the nature of the work.* Also, for outdoor workplaces, it is desirable to take measures to mitigate the effects of the outdoor temperature, etc., during the summer and winter seasons.

(3) Visual Environment

Necessary measures to prevent excessive brightness and uncomfortable glare, along with ensuring proper lighting for work. Also, for indoor workplaces, it is desirable to take measures by taking into account the lighting, color environment, light source, etc.

(4) Sound environment

In offices, *ensuring noise reduction by using noise reduction machines such as office automation (OA) equipment within offices, and taking measures to effectively shield the workplace from outside noise.* Also, reducing noise by covering the source of workplace noise such as machinery in areas separate from the office but still within the workplace.

(5) Work Spaces, etc.

Adequately maintaining work spaces and pathways, etc.

2. Measures to Improve Working Conditions

(1) For work which is conducted in an unnatural way in which the head or neck area, or the entire body, must regularly assume a burden, *improving working methods on machinery and equipment, etc.*

(2) For work that involves regularly carrying heavy items and/or the handling and operation of machinery and equipment, *reducing the burden by introducing devices to assist with such work.*

(3) In work areas with high temperatures, high humidity, high noise, etc., *reducing the burden by installing and remotely operating thermal insulation, sound insulation, etc.*

(4) For work that is continuous and highly stressful, or work that requires that the same position be maintained for a long period of time, *reducing the burden by introducing equipment/devices to ease stress.*

(5) For machinery, office equipment and furniture used every day, *considering ways to make work easier by adapting the operation to conform to the characteristics of work behaviors, along with adequately displaying easy to identify wording.*

3. Facilities, Equipment Installation and Upkeep for Relieving Worker Fatigue [caused by working]

(1) *Maintaining a break room equipped with beds in order to effectively combat fatigue and stress.*

(2) For work that is accompanied by profuse sweating or bodily contamination, *maintaining washing facilities such as shower rooms, etc., and ensuring that they are always clean and easy to use.*

(3) *Maintaining a consultation room, etc., appropriate for consultation regarding fatigue and stress, etc., in the workplace.*

(4) It is desirable to perform environmental maintenance such as providing green spaces on site, along with installing exercise equipment for workers in the workplace.

4. Other Measures Necessary to Create a More Comfortable Work Environment

(1) *Keeping necessary facilities for workers such as restrooms and changing rooms always clean and easy to use.*

(2) *Maintaining a space such as a cafeteria/dining room where meals can be eaten, and keeping it clean.*

(3) It is desirable to maintain a consultation room, water heating equipment, etc., for the convenience of workers.

III. Issues that Must be Considered Regarding the Implementation of Measures to Create a Comfortable Work Environment

It is desirable that employers fully consider the following points when taking the measures necessary to create a comfortable work environment.

1. Ongoing and Planned Initiatives

In order to create and adequately manage a comfortable work environment, it is not enough to simply take measures such as maintaining the necessary facilities and equipment. Rather, subsequent continuous and planned initiatives will also be indispensable in the future. To achieve these, *along with maintaining a promotion system to which a representative is assigned to handle daily promotions, taking measures such as creating a manual in order to ensure the performance and function of equipment, etc. used to create a comfortable work environment, to show their proper function.* Also, taking into account changes in the nature of work, age of the workers, etc., and further taking into account things such as the development of technology related to comfort in the workplace, *always re-evaluating the environment in the workplace and taking the appropriate necessary measures.*

2. Reflecting Workers' Opinions

Considering the fact that the people most impacted by a work environment are the workers themselves, *taking the best possible necessary measures that reflect the opinions of the workers concerning the implementation of measures to create a comfortable work environment, for example by making use of a Safety and Health Committee.*

3. Considering Individual Differences

Taking the necessary measures by considering individual differences such as a worker's age, preferences about environmental conditions such as temperature and illumination, as well as an understanding of how much weight, etc. that an individual can bear.

4. Considering the Benefits

It goes without saying that a workplace, as a place for work, requires efficiency and functionality, but at the same time, because workers spend a prescribed amount of time working there, *we must consider ways to relieve stress and make the workplace beneficial also as a place to live.*

Supplementary Provisions (September 25, 1997, Ministry of Labour, Health and Welfare Cabinet Notification No. 104) Summary

This notification shall apply beginning on the date of execution of provisions listed in Article 1, Number 1 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Law (October 1, 1997) concerning the maintenance of laws related to the Ministry of Labour, Health and Welfare to ensure fair treatment and equal employment opportunities for both men and women.