



# NEWSLETTER

On Occupational Safety and Health & Working Environment

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Vietnam National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health - VNNIOSH

*Socio-economic recovery  
from COVID-19  
Role Of OSH*

# THE ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM IN THE POST-COVID-19 PERIOD

**Dr. Nguyen Anh Tho**

*Acting Director General of*

*Vietnam National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health*

## **The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on development goals in Vietnam**

From 2020 until now, the COVID-19 pandemic has become complicated, unpredictable and prolonged, seriously affecting all aspects of social life from health and life of all classes of people to production and business activities of enterprises.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a comprehensive impact on the economy of Vietnam and the world, heavily affecting many areas of social life and the ability to implement socio-economic development goals, targets and tasks. It has increased the number of people suffering from depression and anxiety disorders by nearly a third in more than 200 countries around the world. Mental health disorders increase the risk of other illnesses and suicide. In addition, the labor intensity is high due to the level of competition is getting fiercer. All of that entails the possibility of increasing the risk of occupational accidents and diseases if the occupational safety and health at work are not well done.

Statistics from the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs show that the number of serious accidents in the period 2011-2021 is constantly increasing. On the other hand, with the gradually extensive integration process, Vietnam must strictly abide by labor standards, including occupational safety and health standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and in new-generation free trade agreements. Some countries use occupational safety and health standards as a technical barrier to Vietnamese goods imported into their country, threatening the continuity of the supply chain of goods in trading, as well as

investment capital to and from large and quality consumer and capital markets in the world.

## **Objectives and tasks of occupational safety and health work**

In that context, Vietnam has issued many unprecedented guidelines and policies to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic, ensure safe production, socio-economic recovery and development, commence "dual-target" strategy with the top priority being taking care of and protecting the health and lives of the people, and making the best efforts to ensure production and business activities.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic until now, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL) has issued a number of policies to support union members and employees facing difficulties due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to promptly support union members, workers, and medical staff to strengthen the frontline against the pandemic and aiding businesses. Although the pandemic situation has calmed down and stabilized at present, taking care of life and ensuring occupational safety and health for trade union members and employees is still the top priority of the VGCL, thereby contributing to advising and proposing solutions to ensure occupational safety and health, and social security in the process of implementing the Government's economic recovery program in the post-pandemic period.

Although many efforts were made and results achieved, the OSH work still has many risks and challenges. In the process of implementing programs and solutions to restore socio-economic development, the posed problems

must be concurrent with programs and solutions to ensure workers, resources to decide the development process can be deployed in a safe and constantly improved environment, so that employees can work with peace of mind, improve labor productivity, contribute to the stable development of the business, economic recovery and sustainable development of the country.

In order to contribute to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the Government's socio-economic recovery and development program, urgent issues of OSH and health care for workers that need to be addressed in the period of 2021 - 2025 include: Preventing an increase in occupational accidents, especially serious accidents that kill many people in the fields of construction, mining, chemicals, and petrochemicals; strengthening supervision of working environment pollution, gradually improving working conditions, taking care of and improving workers' health, building OSH culture, improving social responsibility of businesses, especially those operating in the field of export, etc. In fact, only by being able to work in a safe environment, can employees feel secure to work, improve labor productivity, contribute to the stable development of enterprises and economic recovery and sustainable development of the country.

### **Scientific and technological tasks on occupational safety and health with a vision to 2030**

In general and in the long term, the science and technology tasks on OSH and workers health care are building technology platforms, innovating, digitizing OSH activities, health care, consulting and providing services; research focusing on management solutions, building "Safety Model"; consulting on the application of advanced management system standards and new safety management models such as quantitative risk assessment, development of safety audit services; change the administration of the Occupational Accident and Disease Insurance Fund in the direction of investment in research and application of solutions to OSH, primary health care for employees and occupational rehabilitation; perfecting the system of standards and regulations of Vietnam

in accordance with the new situation and speeding up the harmonization with international standards; technological solutions to monitor safety for technological systems and equipment with strict requirements on OSH, pollution of the working environment by automatic and digitalization technology; research and add new occupational diseases to the list of occupational diseases, conduct an overview and in-depth study on occupational psychology, mental health, especially psychosocial factors and mental health of employees in the workplace work, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic; building a database of cases, mental health care for employees, creating motivation for them in the context of the pandemic. Focus on assessing, anticipating and preparing for the challenges and opportunities that AI technology will bring to the field of OSH. The scientific basis and practical orientation for the work of ensuring OSH and environmental protection in the new period should be based on the evolution of the working conditions, new risks in health and occupational diseases that have not been studied, evaluated and predicted sufficiently in the previous development stage.

Up to now, the OSH legal system has been promulgated extensively, meeting the requirements of management and implementation organization. However, industrialization and modernization also generate new dangerous and toxic factors that lead to employees having to work in conditions with risks of safety loss; the compliance with the law on OSH of most enterprises is still weak, especially in the small and medium-sized enterprises, the informal sector, agricultural production, craft villages, including enterprises and facilities located in the supply chains of labor-intensive industries. Along with the implementation of the socio-economic recovery program after the COVID-19 pandemic, constantly improving the productivity, quality and efficiency of production and business of enterprises, it is always necessary to attach importance to OSH work to be able to control hazards and risks, minimize occupational accidents and diseases that may occur in the process of reproduction, contributing to the sustainable development of enterprises and the social economy.



*Launching ceremony of the Action Month on OSH and the Workers' Month 2022*

## **THE ACTION MONTH ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH AND THE WORKERS' MONTH 2022**

On the morning of April 28, in Hanoi, the Central Steering Committee for Action Month on Occupational Safety and Health collaborated with the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL) held a ceremony to launch the Action Month on Occupational Safety and Health and Workers' month 2022. The Action Month on OSH with the theme "Strengthening measures to reduce risks of occupational safety and health, improving working conditions in the workplace, adapting safely, flexibly to and effectively controlling the COVID-19 pandemic" and Workers' Month 2022 with the theme "Vietnamese workers: Pioneering, innovative, responsible, safe, adaptive" will be held from May 1 to May 31, 2022 nationwide.

The Action Month on OSH 2022 is implemented to promote action programs and measures to improve safe and hygienic working conditions in enterprises and facilities; ensure safety, maintain and develop production; adapt safely and flexibly in disease prevention. This Action Month focuses on implementing a number of thematic events and activities on OSH as follows:

- Renovate and strengthen information and communication activities on OSH both directly and online to enterprises and employees; develop and distribute messages, warnings, handbooks, leaflets, CDs and DVDs guiding the topics and contents of the implementation of the Action Month on OSH in 2022; diversify appropriate forms of information and communication on many channels and mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, internet, networks of radio stations in districts, communes, wards and enterprises.

- Strengthening measures to reduce risks on OSH; preventing occupational accidents and occupational diseases (occupational accidents, occupational diseases) and improving working conditions at the workplace; adapting safely, flexibly and effectively controlling the COVID-19 pandemic; strengthening self-inspection and review of OSH rules and procedures in workshops, groups and teams; providing specific guidance and advice on skills, safe working procedures, rights, obligations and responsibilities in OSH work to enterprises and employees; rights, obligations and responsibilities of enterprises and employees

when participating in occupational accident and occupational disease insurance.

- Focus on providing information, advice, training and guidance for enterprises and employees to identify and assess hazards and risks, improve safe and hygienic working conditions in enterprises and establishments, groups, teams, workshops, factories, construction sites, crowded places, commercial centers, schools, residential areas on ensuring safety in labor, production and prevention against the COVID-19 pandemic; taking the initiative in prevention and training of safe working skills for employees; hospitals, medical examination and treatment facilities will strengthen the organization of training activities, thematic training on OSH for medical staff in disease prevention and control.

- Organizing activities with the participation and coordination of state management agencies, experts, employers, employees, OSH activists such as seminars, dialogues, contests, sharing experiences and typical models on OSH; paying attention, visiting, encouraging and supporting victims and families of victims of occupational accidents and diseases, workers in difficult circumstances.

- Organize inspections and coordinations between departments, agencies and sectors in

inspection and supervision of OSH in industries and occupations with high risk of occupational accidents and diseases such as construction, electricity, mining, chemistry physical, mechanical, working in confined spaces; the use and inspection of machines, equipment and supplies with strict requirements on occupational safety, measurement of the working environment, and training on OSH.

The Workers' Month 2022 is launched by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor to inspire the tradition of solidarity and creativity, and at the same time promote the pioneering role and sense of responsibility of the Vietnamese working class in performing their tasks of socio-economic development well, especially economic recovery and development from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Presidium of the VGCL asked trade unions at all levels to organize practical Workers' Month activities in association with the Action Month on OSH 2022, actively and collaboratively participate in inspection and supervision of the implementation of policies for employees in the context of COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control and socio-economic recovery and development; promoting dialogue, negotiation and signing of collective labor agreements, agreements to ensure welfare, contributing to improving the living standards of employees.



*The exhibition booth of VNNIOSH displaying science and technology products at the ceremony to launch the Action Month on OSH and the Workers' Month 2022*



*Free occupational health check, consultation and treatment of for workers*

## **VNNIOSH: Activities to respond to the Workers' Month and the Action Month on Occupational Safety and Health 2022**

In response to the Workers' Month and the Action Month on Occupational Safety and Health 2022, Vietnam National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (VNNIOSH) has implemented many meaningful and effective activities in accordance with the direction of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL).

Accordingly, propaganda activities are organized in various forms to raise awareness of employees about occupational safety and health (OSH). The Institute has coordinated with the Ninh Thuan Federation of Labour to organize an OSH training course for 70 people who are grassroots trade union officials and OSH activists in non-state enterprises in Ninh Thuan Province in order to strengthen the role of trade unions in supervising the observance of the law on occupational safety and health, at the same time to promote propaganda and training to improve knowledge on OSH for trade union staff who are in charge of OSH work and OSH activists.

At the training course, experts from VNNIOSH exchanged opinions about the role of trade union organizations in the field of OSH and environmental protection in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic; OSH work at the enterprise; guidelines for post-COVID-19 recovery for workers.

Through the training course, trainees continue to improve their knowledge on OSH

and contribute to minimizing occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

In addition, VNNIOSH has also coordinated with the Thanh Hoa Federation of Labour to organize free occupational health check, consultation and treatment of for workers in the province. 100 female workers and laborers in footwear, leather and garment industries were examined for gynecological diseases by doctors from the Center for Occupational Health of VNNIOSH and received counsel and dissemination of knowledge on prevention of occupational diseases and reproductive health care.

After the Workers' Month and the Action Month on OSH, the Institute continues to promote information, propaganda and training on OSH in order to raise awareness and compliance with OSH regulations for employers and employees; to carry out activities to assess and control occupational safety and health hazards and risks in order to take measures to improve working conditions; to provide periodic medical examination for employees, management of occupational hygiene and health of employees; to monitor working environment at workplace to take measures to minimize harm for workers health and prevent occupational diseases; to deploy and apply scientific and technical solutions to improve working environment, contribute to ensuring safety, protecting workers health and the environment.

# VNNIOSH strengthens coordination in the implementation of OSH



*Signing ceremony of the coordination program between VNNIOSH and Thanh Hoa Provincial Federation of Labour*

In the first 6 months of 2022, The Vietnam Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (VNNIOSH) signed a program to coordinate the implementation of occupational safety and health with relevant units in order to improve the efficiency of information and propaganda on OSH, care and protection of workers' health.

## **1. Coordinating with Labor and Trade Unions Magazine**

On February 10, 2022, VNNIOSH signed a program of coordination activities in 2022 with the Labor and Trade Unions Magazine in communication and information on OSH activities such as cooperation in building specialized pages and topics on OSH; organizing forums on OSH and coordinating to publish scientific research results of the Institute, etc., in order to effectively deploy information dissemination and awareness raising activities

of employers and employees on issues of OSH, workers, labor and trade union activities, contribute to building harmonious, stable, progressive and sustainable labor relations of the country.

## **2. Coordinating with Vietnam National Union of Health Workers**

In order to protect the legitimate rights and interests of members and employees in trade union organizations in general and the health sector in particular, VNNIOSH has signed a coordination program for the period of 2022-2026 with the Vietnam National Union of Health Workers on March 8, 2022.

The content of the Coordination Program for the period of 2022-2026 focuses on the urgent tasks of protecting and taking care of the health of medical staff who are being exposed daily to



*Signing ceremony of the coordination program between VNNIOSH and Vietnam National Union of Health Workers*

multiple occupational risk factors; advising on policies on labor health and occupational diseases for trade union members and employees; propagating and training on COVID-19 knowledge and control measures, safe adaptation for union members, health workers and workers in general; strengthen organizational coordination in studying and assessing the impact of the working environment on employment and health of workers in the health sector to serve as

a basis for proposing the development of legal documents and supplementing insured occupational diseases in Vietnam.

### **3. Coordinating with Thanh Hoa Provincial Federation of Labour**

On March 11, 2022, VNNIOSH and the Thanh Hoa Provincial Federation of Labour also signed the deployment of the coordination program for the period of 2022-2025 in order to strengthen the coordination between the two organizations in scientific and technological research, contributing to providing scientific arguments in proposing policies and laws related to the rights and interests of workers and trade unions.

Improving the efficiency of care, representation and protection of legitimate rights and interests of union members and employees, contributing to building a strong Vietnamese working class, meeting the requirements of promoting industrialization and modernization, especially implementing the Trade Union Law, the Labor Law 2019, the Law on Occupational Safety and Health 2015 and the Law on Environmental Protection 2020.

## **METHOD OF CLASSIFYING LABOR CONDITIONS VNNIOSH-2017**

**Assoc Prof PhD. Le Minh Duc**

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Inspection and assessment of labor conditions has become a concern of both employees and employers. In recent years, researchers and managers have studied and developed many methods and measures to improve labor conditions in different industries. Vietnam is no exception to that development and concern.

Currently, in Vietnam, the assessment of labor conditions is still based on Official Dispatch No. 2753/LDTBXH-BHLD dated August 1, 1995 of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs guiding the development of a list of particularly heavy, dangerous and toxic

occupations. The criterion-based collective assessment method consists of two main groups: (1) the group of indicators on working environment hygiene and (2) the group of occupational physiological indicators. However, this method still has some limitations such as the evaluation criteria are different in nature but the average value is taken; difficult to apply to specific professions; it is impossible to interact with the factors when they can amplify each other, especially in the presence of toxic and dangerous chemicals at the same time.

In an effort to develop a method of assessing





*Assessing OSH risks at Son La Hydropower plant*

labor conditions to assess the overall impact of factors (physical and non-physical factors) on employees in the workplace, in 2014, in a joint research program between the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor and the Ministry of Science and Technology, VNNIOSH has presided over the implementation of a study to propose a new assessment method, which is suitable to the reality of Vietnam (known as the VNNIOSH-2017 method). This method is built on the basis of the method of the Russian Federation and the current hygiene standards and regulations in Vietnam. Levels of labor conditions also correspond to levels of occupational safety risks. The method of assessing and classifying the quality of the working environment is consistent with the labor conditions. The quality of the working environment sanitation is assessed according to 7 levels (1. Good quality; 2. Acceptable quality; 3. Mildly hazardous; 4. Moderately hazardous; 5. Severely hazardous; 6. Very toxic; 7. Dangerous). These 7 levels are agreed to be equivalent to the labor conditions.

Principle of the method: classification of labor conditions will collectively consider all factors that affect labor conditions such as microclimate, physical and chemical factors, labor burden, labor intensity, etc. Vietnam's standards and regulations on environment and occupational hygiene are established to provide levels corresponding to the labor conditions. Classification of labor regulations collects relevant factors with the following principles:

- If there is only 1 factor that exceeds the allowed standard, it is classified at levels 3 to 7, depending on the excess level and the combination of excess levels.

- If there is an impact of 3 or more factors with quality level 3, the overall assessment will be level 4; If there are 2 or more factors that combine with levels 4, 5, 6, the last level will receive a higher level.

The VNNIOSH-2017 method has shown a number of advantages: it has applied Vietnam's current standards for comparison and classification. The method collectively used the parameters of the working environment and labor burden to identify and classify labor conditions. Up to now, in Vietnam, there has not been a study that proposes a method to evaluate labor conditions other than VNNIOSH-2017, this is also an important premise for the method to develop and improve in the coming time.

With the high development of awareness of OSH, employees have a higher sense of self-protection at work. However, in terms of the management function, it is also necessary to have an effective tool to assess and classify the arduous and dangerous levels of the job positions for employees. This is the necessary legal basis to strengthen the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of employees. The VNNIOSH-2017 method proved to have many advantages because it synthesized the factors affecting the labor conditions and used the new Vietnamese standards.

## MR VUONG DUC HOANG QUAN WAS APPOINTED DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF VIETNAM NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (VNNIOSH)



*Mr. Tran Van Thuat (on the left), Vice President of Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL), handing over the Decision of Appointment to Mr. Vuong Duc Hoang Quan*

On the morning of May 16, 2022, at the Branch of National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in the Southern Vietnam (SNIOSH), Mr. Tran Van Thuat, Vice President of VGCL handed over Decision No. 4637/QĐ-TLĐ dated 12/05/2022 of the Presidium of the VGCL appointing Mr. Vuong Duc Hoang Quan as Deputy Director of the SNIOSH from May 15, 2021.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Tran Van Thuat assessed that Mr. Vuong Duc Hoang Quan is a well-trained officer with extensive experience in state management, education and training. create and research science. Mr. Quan was especially emphasized to have worked in different units for many years and experience in many fields; he is assessed as capable, having good relationship with colleagues at work. It is hoped that with the professional experience and capacity in the past time, the leaders and staffs of the Institute will create solidarity, complete the

set tasks, contribute to the common development of the Institute.

Formerly, Mr. Quan worked at Ton Duc Thang University, held the position of Chairman of Ton Duc Thang University Council, as well as other certificates such as senior lecturer, PhD in International Trade (Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok). - Thailand), senior political theory; he is evaluated as a staff member with enthusiasm, good professionalism, responsibility for work, ability to lead, manage and administer.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Vuongng Duc Hoang QuAn thanked the Presidium of VGCL for their concern and support in his work and for recognizing his personal efforts. At the same time, he affirmed that he will always strive to learn and improve, maintain moral qualities and political bravery, properly accomplish the assigned tasks.

## SEMINAR ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN THE POST-COVID-19 PERIOD

On the morning of May 31, 2022, the Vietnam National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (VNNIOSH) in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) held a seminar on "The role of occupational safety and health in the the implementation of the socio-economic recovery program in the post-COVID-19 period".

The seminar was held both on-site and online with about 100 delegates who are representatives of ministries, departments, branches, research institutes, universities, provincial federations of labour, industry unions and businesses, corporations, organizations and associations attended the event and discussed the actual situation of OSH work, the situation of labor relations and the State's policies during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is very complicated, unpredictable and long-lasting, seriously affecting all aspects of social life from health and life of all classes of people, workers to employees, production and business activities of enterprises. Against this situation, the Party, National Assembly and Government of Vietnam have issued many unprecedented guidelines and policies to both fight the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure safe production, socio-economic recovery and development in the new normal in order to

realize "dual goals" with the top priority being to take care of and protect people's health and lives, and to make the best efforts to ensure production and business activities.

At the seminar, many delegates suggested that it is necessary to research, review, evaluate and forecast risk factors, current and future risks to the employment of workers in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. In which, it is mandatory to follows the recommendations, guidelines and toolkits of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on OSH to research, apply and concretize in the conditions of Vietnam. At the same time, amend and supplement current OSH training programs, add new knowledge on identification and assessment of existing and future risks, proactive measures to prevent and respond to unexpected situations, etc.

One of the issues mentioned by the delegates was the mental and physical health of employees in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. According to experts, the rate of people suffering from depression and anxiety disorders has increased by almost a third in more than 200 countries around the world. Mental health disorders increase the risk of other illnesses and suicide cases. The labor intensity is getting high due to the fierce competition leading to the

*Overview  
of the seminar*



# NEWSLETTER

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possibility of increasing the risk of occupational accidents and diseases if the OSH work is not done well. According to, Ms. Ingrid Christensen, Director of the Country ILO Office for Vietnam, when it comes to occupational safety and health, people often think about physical health, but mental health today is emerged as a serious problem during COVID-19, not only for workers but also for other groups. Some people can handle it on their own, but others can not. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the mental health of employees.

Emphasizing on a safe working environment for trade union members and employees, Dr. Nguyen Anh Tho, Acting Director General of VNNIOSH stated that urgent safety issues of OSH and health care for workers need to be addressed in the 2021-2025 period, including preventing an increase in occupational accidents, especially serious accidents in construction, mining, chemical and petrochemical sectors; strengthening supervision of working environment pollution, gradually improving working conditions, taking care of and improving workers' health, building a culture of occupational safety and sanitation and also improving corporate social responsibility.

It is necessary to raise the awareness of employers and employees, especially in craft villages, agricultural areas and small and medium enterprises about ensuring OSH associated with the consciousness of environmental protection, public health, employment and sustainable development.

Studies and survey reports have clearly identified hazards and risks to production safety, fire safety, environment, occupational health, risk of COVID-19 infection, as well as biological factors or any other risk of causing accidents, incidents or diseases and also analyzed, provided measures and ways to manage risks to effectively prevent accidents, production incidents, explosion and environmental pollution.

From these studies and surveys, Dr. Nguyen Anh Tho stated that only by working in a safe environment, the employees can feel secure to work then improve labor productivity, and contribute to the stable development of the businesses and the sustainable development of the country.

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