

Safety and Health in Japan

A Newsletter from Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA)



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Measures for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises



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JISHA

The Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Department of the Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA) develops various programs for improving safety and health in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The following are our major programs:

(1) Support Project for Group Safety and Health Activities in Small Enterprises (“*Tampopo* (Dandelion) Project”)

JISHA conducts the Support Project for Group Safety and Health Activities in Small Enterprises under commission from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). This project provides support for the safety and health activities of groups selected by Prefectural Labour Bureaus and then registered with JISHA, including industrial parks, cooperative societies and chambers of commerce and industry whose members are mainly small enterprises with less than 50 employees. The project also provides support for activities conducted by enterprises belonging to the registered groups, including their factories and branch offices. The purpose of the program project is to prevent occupational accidents and improve safety and health in SMEs.

- a) Advisory teams of safety and health experts provide guidance and advice in devising and implementing safety and health activity plans to facilitate the safety and health efforts of registered groups.
- b) JISHA provides a certain level of financial support to cover the expenses incurred by registered groups in conducting safety and health activities.
- c) JISHA and other safety and health service organizations that meet certain criteria provide the safety and health services necessary for improving the work environment in workplaces belonging to the registered groups, increasing the safety of their machinery and equipment, and ensuring the health of their employees. The safety and health services provided include: 1. safety and health diagnosis; 2. safety and health education; 3. special medical examinations; and 4. work environment measurements.

- d) To promote safety and health activities among registered groups, JISHA holds safety and health seminars for registered groups and their member enterprises, and distributes books and materials for these activities.

This support enables registered groups to conduct many types of safety and health activities, such as safety and health patrols, accident case study review meetings, and study groups on ways to develop safety and health management plans. Member enterprises also hold activities such as workplace safety and health exams, safety and health seminars for managers, safety and health education for workplace supervisors, safety and health education regarding the handling of machinery and equipment, and special medical examinations and work environment measurement for those who work with organic solvents. Currently JISHA has about 250 registered groups with about 8,000 member enterprises.

(2) Subsidies for Streamlining Equipment to Improve Workplace Safety

With national government grants, JISHA provides financial support to enterprises that need to make their machinery safer or to improve their work environment. The funds may be applied to: (a) machine safety, such as the installation of safety devices on press machines or of emergency stop devices on various types of automated machinery; (b) work environment improvements, such as the installation of exhaust gas treatment systems, dust collectors with filters, and local exhaust ventilation systems; and (c) workplace environment improvements, such as the installation of air conditioners, light fixtures, and showers for employees. Subsidies are provided to 70-90 workplaces every year.

(3) Zero-Accident Certification Program for SMEs

JISHA issues zero-accident certificates to SMEs that maintain a record of zero accidents for a certain period of time. The purpose of this system is to encourage SMEs to implement safety and health activities voluntarily in order to prevent occupational accidents. This system is implemented in accordance with certificate issuance standards by type of industry and enterprise size. Certificates are issued to 150-200 enterprises every year.

(4) Other Programs

JISHA issues publications and holds seminars on improving safety and health in SMEs. Moreover, JISHA subsidizes educational fees to help SME managerial personnel to develop their knowledge of safety and health issues so they can respond adequately to requests for consultation from their enterprises and provides financial assistance to defray the cost of inviting instructors to deliver presentations at safety and health seminars held by registered groups.

JISHA is fully committed to further improving safety and health in SMEs by enhancing the programs described above and developing new programs in response to the needs of SMEs.

Activities of Industrial Safety and Health Organizations

62nd National Industrial Safety and Health Convention

The 62nd National Industrial Safety and Health Convention was held from October 29 to 31, 2003 in Nagoya, Japan. It attracted more than 12,000 participants from around the nation.



Mr. Chikara SAKAGUCHI, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, at the plenary session

The plenary session on the first day of the convention featured an opening ceremony followed by the presentation of awards to recognize the achievements of individuals and companies in promoting safety and health. This session also featured a speech by Mr. Kenji TSUNEKAWA, Director of the Industrial Safety and Health Department of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), and a special lecture by psychiatrist and author Nada Inada.



A plenary session of the convention



Green Cross Exhibition

On day two, the convention was organized in three tracks with fourteen individual sessions including lectures, symposia, and various presentations of safety and health activities in the workplace. The Green Cross Exhibition and the Comfortable Workplace Forum were held concurrently with the convention.

Emergency Request Issued by JISHA

Given the series of major industrial accidents that have occurred in 2003, JISHA Chairperson Hiroshi OKUDA issued an “Emergency Request for Safety and Health Management Review and the Enforcement of Industrial Accident Prevention Measures” to JISHA’s 124 member organizations on October 10, 2003. This is the second emergency request issued by JISHA, the previous one being on the occasion of the nuclear accident in Tokai Village, Ibaraki Prefecture in 1999.

The request asked enterprise affiliated with each organization to enforce their industrial accident prevention

measures with an emphasis on the following items:

- (1) Strengthening safety and health management
- (2) Ensuring the safety of machinery, equipment, and other devices
- (3) Ensuring that safe methods are used to perform work
- (4) Enhancing safety and health education
- (5) Introducing Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (OSHMS).

Fatigue Accumulation Checklist Now Available

JISHA has published a checklist on its web site to help workers easily assess their own level of accumulated fatigue. Based on the Comprehensive Program for the Prevention of Health Impairment Due to Overwork enacted by the MHLW in February 2002, the MHLW commissioned JISHA to create the checklist.

The preliminary version is now available on the Internet. The content will be reviewed on the basis of user surveys in the future.

The checklist consists of a table of 13 items regarding the individual's symptoms and 7 items regarding his or her work situation over the most recent month. Results are determined in terms of one of four stages based on the level of fatigue experienced from

work, and comments and advice are provided on prevention of accumulated fatigue.

The list can be accessed (in Japanese only) at the JISHA web site (www.jisha.or.jp) or the MHLW web site (www.mhlw.go.jp).

2003 Year-End Zero-Accident Slogan and Slogan for 2004

JISHA collects suggestions annually for its Year-End Zero-Accident slogan and slogan for the next year.

From the 1,762 and 3,781 slogan suggestions received for the 2003 Year-End Zero-Accident slogan and the slogan for 2004, respectively, the following have been selected.

2003 Year-End Zero-Accident Slogan (prizewinner)

“Pass the Zero-Accident Baton during the Year-End and New Year Holidays”
Three other entries received an honorable mention.

2004 Slogan (prizewinner)

“Be Aware of Any Danger for Better Workplace Safety”
Four other entries received an honorable mention.

National Occupational Health Week 2003

The 54th National Occupational Health Week was held October 1 to 7, 2003, following a preparatory period lasting from September 1 to 30. The Week was promoted by the MHLW and JISHA with the cooperation of five sector-specific industrial safety and health associations, and workplaces nationwide participated.

This year's theme was “Look into Your Health and Review Your Workplace Environment.” Based on this theme, which targets the further promotion of voluntary occupational safety and health management activities, the Week featured workplace patrols and work environment monitoring, as well as educational activities such as displaying posters on occupational safety and health.



National Occupational Health Week poster

Distinguished Service Award, JISHA Chairperson's Award, and Green Cross Award Winners in 2003

Every year at the National Industrial Safety and Health Convention, JISHA presents the following awards to recognize the achievements of individuals and companies in promoting safety and health.

The Distinguished Service Award was established in 1971 and is conferred upon individuals or organizations that have contributed to society by working tirelessly to promote safety and health. This year's recipients were Dr. Kazumi TAKADA (visiting professor at the University of Occupational and Environmental Health) and Mr. Ikuo MAE (president of the Boiler & Crane Safety Association).

The JISHA Chairperson's Award was established in 1985 and recognizes companies that have shown outstanding performance in promoting and improving safety and health, and that have achieved remarkable

success in educating people and conveying the importance of health and safety issues. This year the award was presented to two companies: the POLUS GROUP and the Central Japan Railway Company.

The Green Cross Award is awarded to individuals who have devoted many years to and have achieved outstanding success in promoting and improving industrial safety or occupational health. There were 96 recipients of this award nationwide.

Winners of the Innovations, Improvements, and Safety and Health Activities Contest in 2003

The winning products and practices of JISHA's Innovations, Improvements, and Safety and Health Activities Contest in 2003 have been decided. The contest is divided into two categories: the Safety, Health and Comfortable Workplaces category, which focuses on improved, innovative devices for equipment, machinery, and tools, and the Safety and Health Activities category, which recognizes effective safety and health activities.

Ten awards, including two Gold Awards, were presented in the former category and six awards, including two Gold Awards, were presented in the latter category. The gold and silver awards were presented at the plenary session of the National Industrial Safety and Health Convention on October 29, 2003.

Winners of the 15th Safety and Health Education Video Contest

The winners of the 15th Safety and Health Education Video Contest, sponsored by JISHA and the Audio Visual Institute for Safety and Health (AVISH), have been selected.

Entries included self-produced videos used for safety and health education in the workplace (Category A) and non-commercial videos created by a production company commissioned by a workplace (Category B).

The top prizes in Category A were awarded to "Using Videos to Facilitate New Employee Safety and Health Awareness" produced by the Hekinan Plant of the Toyota Industries Corporation and "Thinking about Careless Accidents: Case Studies and Sample Responses" produced by the Nuclear Energy Field Engineering Department of Toshiba Corporation. The top prize in Category B was awarded to "Stepladders are very convenient, but be careful!" produced for TOA Corporation.



The awards ceremony

Labour Administrative Activities

6th Comprehensive Measures to Prevent Hazards Due to Dust Issued

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has issued the 6th Comprehensive Measures to Prevent Hazards Due to Dust for the period from FY2003 to FY2007, and has stipulated the following action items for Prefectural Labour Bureaus and Labour Standards Inspection Offices:

- (1) Preparing information on implementation items such as the pneumoconiosis health examinations offered by Prefectural Labour Bureaus and Labour Standards Inspection Offices
- (2) Providing group and individual guidance to workplaces
- (3) Providing effective and efficient supervision and guidance
- (4) Enforcing proper filing of plans and conducting proper exams and site surveys
- (5) Providing guidance and support to related organizations
 - (a) Providing guidance and submitting requests for promotion of dust hazard prevention activities to industrial accident prevention organizations, employers' organizations, and other groups; (b) submitting requests for promotion of the above activities to manufacturers' organizations
- (6) Conducting educational activities
 - Offering guidance on Dust Hazard Prevention Comprehensive Measures Month and Dust Measures Day
- (7) Requesting the implementation of Measures to Prevent Hazards Due to

Dust in Tunnel Construction Work
(8) Providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

In stipulating the measures which employers must focus on to prevent dust hazards, and ensuring that they are publicized, this policy aims to further prevent pneumoconiosis and addresses the specific measures described below.

- (1) Dust Hazard Prevention Measures for Arc Welding
 - (a) Promoting work environment improvements through the diffusion of installation of local exhaust ventilation system or push-pull ventilation system, etc.; (b) ensuring the proper operation of local exhaust ventilation systems and performing inspections and spot testing; (c) fully enforcing requirements to wear respiratory protective equipment and promoting the proper methods to use such equipment; (d) further promoting health preservation measures; and (e) ensuring awareness of laws and regulations and enforcing pneumoconiosis outbreak prevention policies.
- (2) Dust Hazard Prevention Measures for Metal Grinding Work
 - (a) Enforcing measures against specified sources of dust; (b) enforcing work environment measurements and measures based on the results; (c) ensuring the proper operation of local exhaust ventilation system and performing inspections and spot testing; (d) fully enforcing requirements to wear respiratory protective equipment and promoting the proper methods to use such equipment; (e) promoting measures against accumulated dust; (f) ensuring that special education is

provided; (g) further promoting health preservation measures; and (h) ensuring awareness of laws and regulations and enforcing pneumoconiosis outbreak prevention policies.

- (3) Measures to Prevent Hazards Due to Dust in Tunnel Construction Work
 - (a) Promoting measures based on the Guidelines on Dust-preventive Measures for Construction Sites of Tunnels and Other Facilities; (b) further promoting health preservation measures; (c) ensuring the implementation of measures required of master employers; (d) promoting policies for the branch offices of tunnel construction companies; and (e) ensuring awareness of laws and regulations and enforcing pneumoconiosis outbreak prevention policies.
- (4) Dust Hazard Prevention Measures for Other Work in Dusty Environments and Industries
- (5) Health Preservation after Leaving the Job
 - (a) Promoting health preservation measures for those diagnosed with pneumoconiosis that are leaving the job; and (b) promoting awareness on obtaining personal health records among those who plan to leave the job.

Revised Labour Standards Law Enacted

The Revised Labour Standards Law (Law No. 104) was enacted on July 4, 2003. Its major revisions concern terminable labour contracts, dismissal rules, and the discretionary labour system.

The maximum term of terminable labour contracts used to be one year in general cases, and three years for high-level professionals or for those 60 years of age or older. The current revisions extend that maximum term to three years and five years, respectively. The revision is intended to eliminate contract renewal hassles and to guarantee workers longer terms of employment.

Regarding dismissals, the law stipulates that “if an employer dismisses an employee without a specific objective and a rational reason, the employer shall be regarded as having abused its rights and such dismissal shall be invalidated.” This is aimed at preventing employers from dismissing employees unfairly.

The discretionary labour system recognized by the Labour Standards Law applies to two types of work, “planning/analysis/survey work” and “specialized work” (such as R&D, information processing system design, etc.). Thus far, the discretionary labour system for “planning/analysis/survey work” has only applied to head offices and major branches where important decisions are made, but the revisions extend the application of this system to regular sales offices as well.

Partial Revisions Made to the Industrial Safety and Health Law and the Working Environment Measurement Law

The Law Regarding the Development of Laws Related to the MHLW for Promoting Reforms of Charitable Corporations (Law No. 102) was enacted on July 2, 2003. The

law changes the system of designated institutions that perform inspections and training based on various laws (such as the Mental Health and Welfare Law, Waterworks Law, Law for Maintenance of Sanitation in Buildings, Industrial Safety and Health Law, Working Environment Measurement Law, Pharmaceutical Affairs Law and the Blood Collection and Blood Donor Supply Service Control Law) from a designation system to a registration system.

Guidelines for Measures to Prevent Public Accidents Caused by the Collapse of Exterior Walls during Building Demolition Work

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) issued the Guidelines for Measures to Prevent Public Accidents Caused by the Collapse of Exterior Walls during Building Demolition Work on July 3, 2003, and gave notification of this to relevant organizations.

The guidelines stipulate that caution must be exercised in the following areas related to building demolition work:

- (1) The developer (who orders the work) and contractor (who performs the work) shall conduct a preliminary survey and assessment of the structure of the building targeted for demolition, and then select a demolition method and create a demolition plan that give due consideration to accident prevention.

- (2) If an unexpected structural element or piece of equipment is discovered during the demolition process, the contractor shall immediately halt work and adjust the demolition plan.
- (3) When performing demolition work on a building whose exterior walls are not structurally independent, such as a building whose periphery is overhanging or a building with a curtain wall, the contractor shall select the demolition method, create a demolition plan, and perform the demolition work appropriately in such a way as to maintain the structural stability of the building at each stage of the demolition process, in order to prevent the occurrence of a public accident.
- (4) When demolishing a junction between different types of structures, such as steel-frame structures, reinforced concrete structures, or precast concrete structures, or a junction between additions or remodeled work and older construction, the contractor shall create a demolition plan and perform demolition work with due consideration to the strength and other attributes of the conjoined section.
- (5) After adequately confirming the potential impact of accidents that might occur during the demolition of large buildings, identifying the party responsible for such accidents, and verifying which demolition technologies will be needed, as well as ensuring compliance with all relevant laws and regulations, the developer and contractor shall draw up a

contract, create a demolition plan, and perform the work.

- (6) Building owners and managers shall strive to preserve blueprints and specifications as well as as-built drawings from the initial construction of their buildings and from any additions or remodeling and expansion work performed.

2003 White Paper on the Labour Economy

The MHLW has released the 2003 White Paper on the Labour Economy. Focusing on “economic and social changes and the diversification of working patterns,” the white paper suggests that the following efforts be made to achieve the diversification of working patterns required by contemporary Japan:

- (1) Ensuring adequate employment opportunities
- (2) Offering benefits and evaluations that satisfy workers
- (3) Ensuring an adequate selection of working pattern options
- (4) Offering a working lifestyle that allows workers to balance work with home life
- (5) Ensuring that ambitious workers have opportunities to develop their skills.

Creating conditions that allow workers with ambition and talent to demonstrate their own skills, regardless of the work pattern adopted, can lead to improved productivity for the

company, and thus to the revitalization of the Japanese economy.

2003 White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare

The MHLW has released the 2003 White Paper on Health, Labour and Welfare. The first section of the first half of the white paper discusses this year’s theme, “envisioning dynamic senior citizens and building new relationships between generations.” The white paper emphasizes the need to create systems that enable the different generations to mutually support one another.

The second section presents an overview of how health, labour, and welfare issues are addressed by the government, and is comprised of the following 11 chapters:

- (1) Creating a Social Environment for Raising Children and Finding Rewarding Work
- (2) Ensuring Employment Stability for Workers
- (3) Developing Workers’ Professional Skills and Creating Environments for Showcasing Skills
- (4) Creating a Secure Working Environment
- (5) Promoting a Society Where Seniors Can Feel Secure and Live Meaningful Lives
- (6) Ensuring Health Care That People Can Trust
- (7) Ensuring the Safety of Drugs and Food Products
- (8) Making Efforts to Lead Healthy Lives

- (9) Promoting Policies for People with Disabilities and Community Welfare Efforts
- (10) Contributing to the International Community
- (11) Improving Government Systems.

Revised Standards for Recognizing Asbestos Diseases

The MHLW has revised the worker’s accident compensation insurance system for recognizing diseases caused by asbestos. The revised standards for recognizing asbestos diseases now include pericardium, mesothelioma of the tunica vaginalis testis, benign asbestos pleural effusion, and diffuse pleural thickening as asbestos-related diseases. The revision also expanded the range of the work operations considered to involve asbestos exposure. Further, the condition regarding the length of time working with asbestos that must be met for mesothelioma to be recognized as being asbestos-related has been reduced from five years or longer to one year or longer.

The MHLW has also partially revised the Enforcement Order of the Industrial Safety and Health Law to prohibit the manufacture, import, or use of asbestos.

Research and Statistics

Results of the Survey on Accident Prevention Methods through KY (Hazard Prediction) Activities and Human Error Reduction

As part of its Research on Methods to Prevent Human Error in the Workplace (led by a committee of the same name), JISHA has compiled its Survey Report on Accident Prevention Methods through KY (Hazard Prediction) Activities and Human Error Reduction.

According to this report, KY activities have been introduced in 80.6% of workplaces. In these workplaces, the average frequency rate of accidents declined 38% between five years before adoption of KY activities to five years after adoption. Reductions were due not only to KY activities, but also to activities such as improvements in working environment in the workplace. Also, 60% to 70% of workplaces reported positive assessments of their own activities.

KY activities are being positively adopted in the workplace. The survey results, however, indicated some issues with the KY activity structure, as indicated by the prevalence of respondents who cited "weak education and training systems" (23.5%). Additionally, the survey revealed concerns about KY activities becoming too routine and companies' inability to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. However, regarding future activities, 93.4% of respondents indicated a positive attitude on KY efforts.

Based on the results of this survey, the committee will continue to carefully investigate ways to promote activities and develop methods to reduce human error in the workplace in FY2003.

Results of 2002 Survey on Industrial Accidents

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has released the findings of its 2003 Survey on Industrial Accidents. This survey is conducted to identify the conditions in which industrial accidents occur in the major industries. It is conducted twice a year in companies with more than 100 employees and once a year in companies with 10-99 employees.

The results now being released are the survey results for the entire year of 2002 in companies with more than 100 employees.

The frequency rate of industrial accidents in 2002 (the frequency of industrial accidents expressed as the number of fatalities or injuries caused by industrial accidents per one million hours of work) was 1.77, down 0.02 points from 2001 (1.79). A breakdown by industry reveals that the transportation and communications industry had the highest accident frequency at 4.42, followed by the service industry at 3.83. Rates fell from 2001 in most industries, including the mining industry, which was down 2.54 points.

The severity rate (the seriousness of accidents expressed as the number of work days lost per one thousand hours

of work) was 0.12, down 0.01 point from 2001 (0.13). A breakdown by industry reveals that the transportation and communications industry had the highest degree of seriousness at 0.19, followed by the service industry at 0.18 and the construction industry at 0.17.

The average number of work days lost (the total number of work days lost due to injuries and deaths resulting from industrial accidents) was 67.2 days, down 4.2 days from 2001 (71.4 days). By industry, the construction industry had the highest number of work days lost, at 369.3 days, while the electric, gas, heat, and water utilities had the lowest number, at 20.6 days. The most significant changes from the previous year were the 234.5-day increase in days lost in the construction industry and the 135.6-day decrease in the mining industry.

Workmen's Accident Compensation Payments for Brain Disorders and Heart Diseases: 317

The MHLW has issued its FY2002 reports on workmen's accident compensation payments for cerebrovascular disease and ischemic heart disease (death from overwork) and workmen's accident compensation payments for mental health impairments.

These reports show that there were 317 workmen's compensation payments for cerebrovascular disease and ischemic heart disease in FY2002, up 122% from the 174 claims in FY2001. Of those for whom claims were filed, more than half (160) died as a result of

their disease. Also, 262 cases (83%) were identified as being caused by work-related damage due to extended periods of overwork. The number of workmen's compensation payments for mental health impairments such as depression caused by work increased by 30 cases from FY2002 to 100 cases. Of these, 43 resulted in either suicide or attempted suicide.

Accidents Involving Hazardous Materials in 2002: 671

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA) has compiled the Report on Accidents Involving Hazardous Materials in 2002. According to this report, there were a total of 671 hazardous material accidents in 2002, the same number as in 2001. The FDMA issued Basic Guidelines on Hazardous Material Accident Prevention and the FY2003 Hazardous Material Accident Prevention Plan in May 2003 and continues to work to prevent hazardous material accidents. The accident report for 2002, however, suggests that efforts need to be made to more aggressively implement this plan.

Suicide Statistics

The National Police Agency has reported that there were 32,143 cases of suicide in 2002, an increase of 1,101 cases (3.5%) over the

previous year. This is the fifth consecutive year that the number of suicide cases has exceeded 30,000. By gender, men accounted for 23,080 suicides, or 71.8% of the total.

The number of suicides in Japan tends to increase with age, with those aged 60 and older accounting for 34.6%, followed in descending order by those in their 50s (26.3%), 40s (15.0%), and 30s (12.2%).

By occupation, the unemployed accounted for 47.0%, followed by the employed (23.2%) and the self-employed (12.8%), in that order.

The reasons to which the suicides were attributed included health problems (46%), economic and lifestyle problems (24.7%), domestic problems (8.5%), and work problems (5.5%).

Results of the 2002 Survey of Workers' Health

Every five years, the MHLW conducts a survey to ascertain the effects of work on health by examining such factors as workers' health conditions, the status of efforts to promote health preservation measures, and the prevalence of work-related illnesses. The purpose of the survey is to obtain basic data that can be used in industrial health administration. The results of the 2002 survey are now available.

The survey results show that 87.1% of enterprises carried out periodic medical examinations, up 2.9% from five years ago. However, only 37.4% of

enterprises made efforts to promote health, down 9% from five years ago. Results indicate that 23.5% of workplaces took steps to offer mental health care support, while 59.1% implemented measures to discourage smoking.

2002 Regular Inspection Results

The MHLW has announced the results of 2002 regular inspections stipulated by the Labour Standards Law and other regulations. According to the results, 62.7% of workplaces were found in some degree of violation of the Labour Standards Law or Industrial Safety and Health Law, down 0.7 percentage points from 2001. Of the 1,328 cases that have been referred for prosecution for legal violations, the largest share has come from the construction industry (42.8%), followed by the manufacturing industry (24.2%) and commerce (9.1%).

Research and Statistics

Domestic Topics



Preventing Drunk Driving among Professional Bus Drivers

On August 18, an expressway bus driver was arrested for drunk driving while on duty. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport took the matter very seriously and conducted a special investigation resulting in the imposition of strict administrative measures against the bus company. It also asked the Nihon Bus Association to hold a meeting to discuss measures to prevent drunk driving.

The Association established the following measures to prevent the recurrence of such an incident on September 16. All drivers will undergo alcohol detector testing upon both departure and arrival. The Association also decided to deter drivers from surreptitious drinking by instituting random testing among chartered bus drivers before departures from overnight stops.

Alarming Series of Plant Fires/Explosions

There has been a shocking series of plant fires throughout Japan in 2003. In July, a fire at a steel manufacturing plant killed one worker and injured two others. In August, two storage tank explosions at refuse-derived fuel power stations killed two workers and injured five others, and a gasoline tank fire at an oil refinery resulted in six deaths. In September, a gas storage tank exploded at a steelworks, injuring 15 people, and a fire broke out at a tire factory.

To prevent the recurrence of such major accidents, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency of the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry held the first Inter-Ministerial Liaison Meeting on the Promotion of Measures to Prevent Industrial Accidents on October 8, 2003. The meeting sessions allow the relevant government ministries to exchange information, investigate safety measures, and gather input as necessary from the industrial sector.

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JISHA was established in 1964 under the Industrial Accident Prevention Organization Law. Its purpose is to eliminate industrial accidents by improving Japan's industrial safety and health levels through voluntary accident prevention activities among businesses throughout Japan.

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