

# Safety and Health in Japan

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



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# Current Overview and Issues Regarding Occupational Accidents in Japan



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In 2003, the number of fatalities caused by occupational accidents in Japan declined to 1,628, the lowest level ever (30 fewer than the previous year, down 1.8%). The figure has now fallen for four consecutive years.

The total of the number of fatal accidents and accidents requiring four or more days off work, however, remained almost the same as the previous year, at 125,750 (168 fewer than the previous year, down 0.1%).

Furthermore, there were 249 serious occupational accidents involving the simultaneous work-related death, injury, or illness of three or more workers, the highest number in the past 25 years (18 more than the previous year, up 7.8%). About half of these serious occupational accidents were attributable to traffic accidents, but even excluding these, there were 129 such accidents reported (up 36 from the previous year, excluding traffic accidents).

A breakdown by industry shows that the number of occupational accidents fell sharply in the construction industry, while it remained flat or rose slightly in the manufacturing industry. While fatal accidents were down 9.7% (59 fewer) from the previous year in the construction industry, they were up 6.5% (18 more) in the manufacturing industry. The total of fatal accidents plus accidents requiring four or more days off was down 4.5% (1,387 fewer) in the construction industry, but down only 1.2% (403 fewer) in the manufacturing industry.

Since last summer, there has been a series of serious accidents that have threatened to damage the high level of trust placed in the safety management practices of Japanese companies, a hard-won trust that has been built up over many years through the efforts of many concerned people. These accidents, consisting of explosions and fires at workplaces owned by leading Japanese manufacturers, included a gasoline tank fire at an oil storage facility, a gas tank explosion at a steel mill, and a fire at a tire manufacturing plant.

Some observers say that this may result from the fact that the long-term recession that Japan has been battling since the early 1990s has compelled many companies to undertake massive restructuring efforts, including reductions of personnel, major organizational changes, and cuts in their safety and health management budgets.

In response to this situation, in March 2003 the national government formulated Urgent Policies for Strengthening Safety Management at Large Manufacturing Sites in order to enhance its leadership in this area. JISHA, which is tasked with providing active support for the voluntary adoption of safety measures by corporations, is cooperating with the efforts of the government by actively supporting efforts to prevent occupational accidents and improve safety management in the workplace.

JISHA has been conducting important survey-based research on the prevention of occupational accidents since it was founded, and has decided to focus its survey-based research efforts in FY2004 on two important themes aimed at addressing the abovementioned challenges facing manufacturing sites.

The first theme for study is the processes by which technologies and know-how related to safety and health are handed down at manufacturing sites. As restructuring efforts progress, safety and health personnel are being reduced, leaving production sites with fewer and fewer veterans who have a wealth of knowledge and experience related to safety and health matters. The “safety and health capacity” that has accumulated over many years at individual workplaces seems to be on the decline. It is therefore important to identify the current trends and then to identify specific good examples of structures that workplaces have created to ensure that safety and health technologies and know-how will be passed down to newer workers.

The second theme for study is safety and health management practices at manufacturing sites where some aspects of the work is contracted out to other companies. In recent years, there has been an increase in outsourcing to subcontractors (“in-plant subcontractors”) at manufacturing sites. As a result, there are more and more workplaces where workers operating under different lines of authority all work together—or, in other words, where the company’s own workers work alongside the workers of a subcontracting company or companies. JISHA’s research will aim to shed light on situation of safety and health at workplaces like these, and to outline the relevant issues that need to be addressed in the future.

In addition to addressing these two themes, JISHA will conduct survey-based research to meet the needs of specific workplaces as well as pioneering survey-based research in new areas. Through these efforts, we earnestly hope to contribute to the improvement of occupational safety and health.

# Activities of Industrial Safety and Health Organizations

## Toyota Safety and Health Management Performs First Certification as a JISHA Occupational Safety and Health Management System (OSHMS) Evaluation and Certification Agency

To ensure the promotion of JISHA OSHMS Registration, JISHA has contracted with Toyota Safety and Health Management Co., Ltd. (TSHM), recognizing it as a JISHA OSHMS Evaluation and Certification Agency.

TSHM is engaged in the process of certifying 14 Toyota Group companies, and about 500 related companies which are members of TSHM and are participating in its program. Four workplaces were certified at the first certification ceremony on April 5, 2004.

## The 21st Kubota Award Winner

The Kubota Award was established in 1984 with a donation from the family of the late Dr. Juko KUBOTA, the first director of JISHA's Occupational Health Service Center. Dr. Kubota made significant

contributions toward improving the level of occupational health in Japan. The award recognizes the meritorious service of individuals or organizations for their achievements in promoting occupational safety and health.

On April 21, 2004, the 21st Kubota Award was presented to Dr. Yoji MINAGAWA, an industrial physician who has made significant contributions to improving the levels of occupational health in Japan. Dr. Minagawa devoted many years of hard work to the field of occupational health management, addressing such topics as the harmful physical factors and psychological burdens of the workplace. He also has used his wealth of knowledge and experience to play a role in educating people in many different aspects of the field of occupational health.

## OSH-SQUARE Opens

The new OSH-SQUARE, a facility that integrates the renovated Industrial Safety Museum and the 3D theater and virtual reality theater of the Japan Advanced Information Center of Safety and Health (JAISH), opened in Minato-ku, Tokyo, on April 20, 2004.

The Industrial Safety Museum's new Welcome-zone is equipped with video monitors that show various statistics on

occupational accidents. Other monitors use computer graphics and narration (currently in Japanese only) to explain the necessity and effectiveness of OSHMS. As the starting point for any museum tour, this safety and health information and knowledge is presented in a format that can be easily understood by museum visitors. To make OSH-SQUARE more user-friendly and easy to navigate, facility guides and signs have also been renovated.

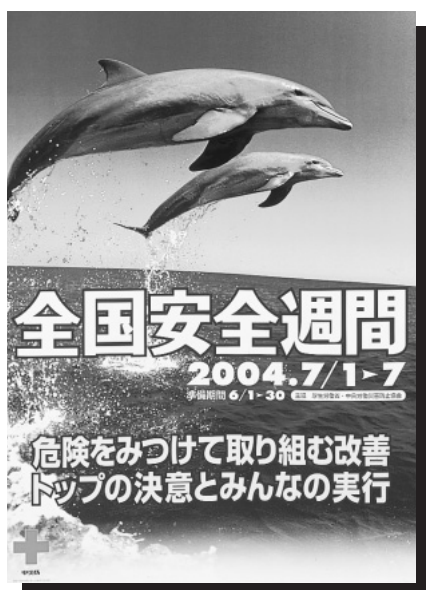
Similar renovations were undertaken at the Osaka Industrial Safety Museum, which likewise was reopened as another OSH-SQUARE.

## National Safety Week 2004

The 77th National Safety Week was held by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and JISHA with the support of five sector-specific industrial safety and health associations. Following the preparatory period (June 1 to 30), the National Safety Week was held at workplaces across the nation from July 1 to 7, 2004.

Based on the National Safety Week 2004 phrase, "Spotting and Eradicating Hazards in the Workplace: Management Commitment and Worker Efforts," active efforts were made at workplaces across Japan to establish

The Industrial Safety Museum's new Welcome-zone



National Safety Week 2004 poster

systematic and continuous safety and health management practices in order to further improve safety.

During the week, workplace safety patrols were conducted in various workplaces, and the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare recognized the achievements of workplaces that demonstrated excellence in their occupational safety and health management practices, and acknowledged individuals with commendable achievements in the field of safety and health.

At the main award ceremony, the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare presented the Award for Excellence in Safety and Health to 16 workplaces and

the Award for Commendable Achievement in Safety and Health to one individual. The Award for Outstanding Organizations in Safety and Health was not granted this year.

## JICOSH Training Programs in FY2003

The Japan International Center for Occupational Safety and Health (JICOSH) invites corporate safety and health management personnel and workers at safety and health organizations from developing





JICOSH technical training session participants

countries where Japanese companies do business to Japan and conducts technical training programs for them. In FY2003, JICOSH conducted the following 10 training programs for 130 overseas trainees.

- (1) Work Environment Measurement and Improvement
- (2) Press Machine Safety
- (3) Zero Accident Activities (KYT)
- (4) Zero Accident Activities (KYT) (Vietnamese)
- (5) Safety Assessment of Construction Work Plan
- (6) Safety for Cranes
- (7) Safety Management in Construction Work
- (8) Safety Management and Inspection for Machinery
- (9) Ergonomics
- (10) Zero Accident Activities (KYT) (Mongolian)

# Labour Administrative Activities

## MHLW Formulates Urgent Policies for Strengthening Safety Management at Large Manufacturing Sites

Based on its report on self-inspections of safety management systems and activities conducted in November 2003, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) formulated Urgent Policies for Strengthening Safety Management at Large Manufacturing Sites in March 2004 in order to improve safety management levels at the sites which were subjects of the self-inspections. The policies will apply to large manufacturing sites with 300 or more employees, mainly the same sites subject to the self-inspections.

The top officials of the Prefectural Labour Offices will enhance instruction provided to top management regarding safety and management issues, and the MHLW will provide guidance to the heads of major industrial organizations in the manufacturing industry.

The Prefectural Labour Offices will emphasize the following points in providing individual guidance to workplaces whose self-inspection results indicate some measure of difficulty in safety management issues.

1. Declaration of safety and health policies by heads of workplaces

2. Activation of safety committees
3. Ensuring that communication among the people concerned is adequate in workplaces where workers from multiple companies/organizations are present
4. Improvement of training provided to safety supervisors upon their appointment
5. Improvement of safety training provided to workers when they are hired or transferred to a new position
6. Identification and assessment of hazards in the workplace and development of appropriate policies as needed
7. Ensuring that equipment is properly maintained

## Discussion of Corporate Social Responsibility in Labour Practices

In light of growing public interest in the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the MHLW has established the Committee on CSR in Labour Practices. The committee held its first meeting on March 18, 2004.

The committee will examine the importance of exercising CSR in labour practices, policies for promoting CSR, and fostering Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) based on whether a company is fulfilling its social responsibilities.

At the first meeting, the MHLW identified the following six questions for further study.

1. How can we promote a system that encourages the market to give positive recognition to companies that give due consideration to the health and family lives of their workers?
2. How can we promote greater human resource investment, such as the corporate provision of worker training, as CSR and SRI efforts?
3. How can we promote the corporate provision of support for workers' social contribution activities as CSR and SRI efforts?
4. How can we use CSR and SRI to promote such efforts as the appointment of female managers to create employment environments that enable female workers to fully demonstrate their capabilities?
5. With more and more companies moving overseas, does more consideration need to be given now than in the past to workers in those overseas locations?
6. Several methods of SRI are now being developed. Investors can select brands that are fulfilling their social responsibilities or they can examine the potential problems faced by companies. How do we need to address these two approaches?  
Essentially, CSR is exercised voluntarily by individual companies, but the

MHLW is exploring the potential need for the government to develop a particular approach to organizing diverse ideas about CSR and fostering an environment that facilitates CSR. The committee will discuss the government's involvement in such matters. The committee also plans to conduct hearings with labour and management to help organize suggestions.

### **MHLW Establishes Committee on Future Approaches to Occupational Safety and Health**

In light of the increase in serious occupational accidents, the MHLW convened the first meeting of the Committee on Future Approaches to Occupational Safety and Health on March 30, 2004. The committee considers the possibility of making revisions to the Industrial Safety and Health Law, and discusses the introduction of OSHMS for risk reduction as a means of preventing serious occupational accidents. It also discusses new safety and health management systems capable of addressing the needs that have arisen from increased contract-based work and corporate restructuring. The committee will examine the following matters by July 2004.

1. Approaches to corporate safety and health management systems for

preventing explosions and other serious occupational accidents

- a) Safety and health management systems that involve top management
  - b) Safety and health management in workplaces where workers from subsidiaries and subcontractors are present
  - c) Stimulation of the functions of safety and health committees in businesses
2. Approaches to safety and health management activities for more effective prevention of occupational accidents
    - a) Ensuring the presence of personnel in charge of safety and health who are responsible for promoting appropriate safety and health policies for the workplace
    - b) Policies for reducing disaster risk in the workplace
    - c) Policies for increasing safety and health awareness among workers
  3. Other matters pertaining to safety and health policies that must be examined due to changes in social and economics conditions

### **Regional Labour Administrative Policy for FY2004 Announced**

On March 29, 2004, the MHLW announced the Regional Labour Administrative Policy for FY2004 and notified all the

Prefectural Labour Offices of its content. On the basis of this policy, each Prefectural Labour Office will formulate and systematically implement administrative policies that address the major challenges in their particular region.

This year, given the circumstances surrounding contemporary labour administration, the policy highlights such issues as the need to ensure job stability and working conditions in a challenging employment environment, the need for improvements to create safe and healthy working environments, and methods of addressing the decline in the birthrate and aging of society as well as the development of diverse working patterns. It also identifies issues that require urgent attention.

The issues pertaining to occupational safety and health identified as important for the "development of policies to ensure the safety and health of workers" are listed below.

1. Improvement of safety measures in the workplace to prevent large explosions
2. Development of policies for ensuring the health of workers, such as policies to prevent overwork
3. Promotion of mental health policies by establishing ties between workplaces and local communities
4. Implementation of measures aimed at promoting the further



improvement of safety and health levels in the workplace

5. Promotion of the creation of comfortable working environments
6. Smooth enforcement of the revised Industrial Safety and Health Law

### **Partial Amendment of the Ordinance on Health Standards in the Office and the Ordinance on Industrial Safety and Health**

The MHLW has revised parts of the Ordinance on Health Standards in the Office as well as the corresponding portions of the Ordinance on Industrial Safety and Health. The major revisions are listed below.

1. Revisions to the Ordinance on Health Standards in the Office
  - a) Provisions pertaining to the air-conditioning equipment and mechanical ventilation equipment that must be installed to manage the indoor air environment now pertain not only to centrally controlled systems, but to all types of systems
  - b) New indoor formaldehyde concentration standards and regulations regarding measurements in rooms where new construction or major

renovations have taken place have been added

- c) When certain conditions are met, the revisions allow for less frequent work environment measurements in offices, which previously had to be performed once every two months
- d) Revisions require that cooling towers and humidifiers in air-conditioning equipment be regularly inspected and cleaned
- e) Revisions require that employers improve the efficiency of efforts to eradicate rodents and insects, and that only drugs and quasi-drugs approved under the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law be used in rodenticides or insecticides

2. Revisions to the Ordinance on Industrial Safety and Health  
A revision similar to that listed in item e) above

### **Revisions to the Guidelines for Promoting Mental Health for National Government Employees**

In light of the increase of suicides and cases of long-term absence due to mental illness among national government employees, the National Personnel Authority (NPA) revised its

Guidelines for Promoting Mental Health for National Government Employees and notified each ministry of the revisions on March 30, 2004.

The new guidelines emphasize preventive measures, stating that “mental health promotion must be done while people are in a state of good mental health.” Supervisors need to recognize the warning signs of mental health problems, such as coming to work late or going home early, or repeatedly making simple mistakes, as early on as possible, and they need to contact the worker’s family or a mental health specialist.

Since stress can be a cause of mental health problems, the NPA has created a chart that workers can use to assess their own stress levels. Each ministry and agency is asked to use this chart. By asking workers to think about whether certain descriptions apply to themselves, such as “I don’t enjoy anything I eat,” or “I have a stiff neck or back,” the chart can serve as a useful tool for worker health management.

The NPA is also asking each ministry and agency to implement a mental health training program based on workers’ positions and types of work, to establish a health consultation office for workers and their families, and to create rehabilitation plans for reducing the workloads of employees who return to work after long-term absences due to mental illness.

### Partial Amendment of the Ordinance on Safety of Boilers and Pressure Vessels

The MHLW has revised part of the Ordinance on Safety of Boilers and Pressure Vessels as well as the corresponding portions of the Ordinance on Industrial Safety and Health.

Two revisions were made. First, the standards for employer appointment of an operations chief of boilers were revised. Now, special class, first class, and second class boiler operators are eligible to be appointed as operations chief of boilers, as follows: when the total heating surface of operating boilers is 500 m<sup>2</sup> or more, only a licensed special class boiler operator; when the total heating surface is 25 m<sup>2</sup> or more to less than 500 m<sup>2</sup>, a licensed special class or first class boiler operator; when the total heating surface is less than 25 m<sup>2</sup>, a licensed special class, first class, or second class boiler operator. Also, because of recent developments in automatic controllers, the heating surface of boilers equipped with automatic controllers that meet boiler safety management standards do not need to be included in calculations.

Second, revisions were made to the license examination qualifications for special class and first class boiler operators. A “certain level of practical

experience” is no longer required for taking the exam, but is still required to receive a license.

### MHLW Establishes Committee on Overwork and Mental Health Policies

The MHLW has established the Committee on Overwork and Mental Health Policies. Its first meeting was held on April 28, 2004.

With the current economic difficulties continuing to bring about changes in working conditions, more than 60% of workers report stress at work, and the number of health impairments and cases of suicide due to overwork is increasing. The committee was established due to a recognized need for policies to prevent health impairments due to overwork, as well as for mental health policies. In the area of overwork policies, the committee will study policies for preventing excessive workloads and ways to manage health under heavy workloads. In the area of mental health policies, the committee will examine stress prevention policies, policies to help workers appropriately manage stress, and ways to establish consultation systems outside the workplace.

The committee will be conducting hearings with people in various industries, and plans to issue a report on its

findings, considering potential revisions to the Industrial Safety and Health Law in the summer of 2004.

# Research and Statistics

## Final Data on Fatalities and Serious Occupational Accidents in 2003

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has released its final figures on the number of work-related fatalities and serious occupational accidents that occurred in 2003.

There were a total of 249 serious occupational accidents involving simultaneous work-related death, injury, or illness of three or more workers, 7.8% higher than the 231 cases reported in 2002. This figure is also about 1.77 times higher than the 141 cases in 1985, which was the lowest number in the past 30 years. (See graph below.)

The number of fatalities in 2003, however, fell to 1,628, down 30 from the previous year. By industry, the number of fatalities was: construction, 548; manufacturing, 293; and overland

cargo transportation, 241. By type of accident, the largest number was caused by road traffic accidents (482 fatalities). This was followed by accidents involving a fall to a lower level (413 fatalities) and accidents in which the victim was caught in or compressed by equipment (229 fatalities). The largest increases in occupational fatalities in 2003 occurred in the category of fire-related deaths (18 higher than in 2002) and fatalities caused by an explosion (16 higher than in 2002).

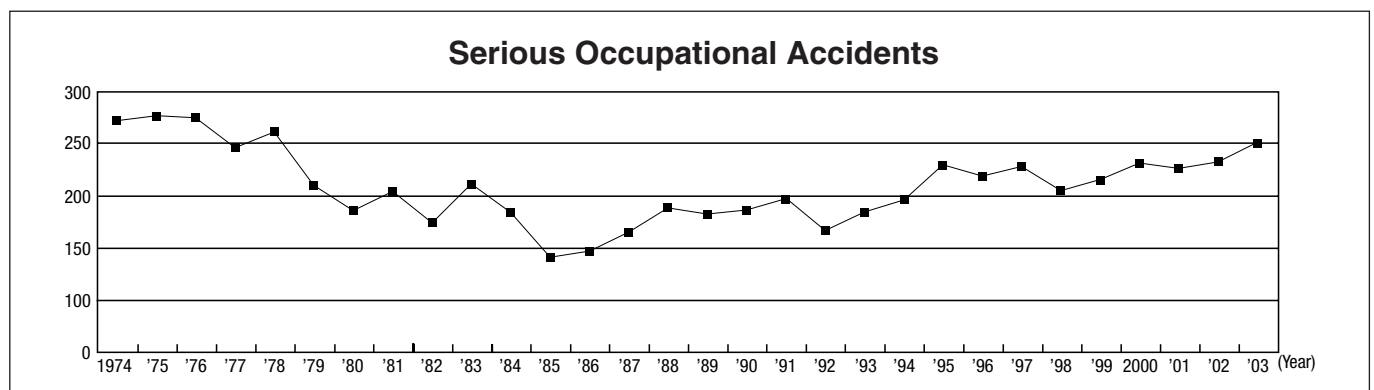
## FY2003 Workmen's Compensation for Cerebrovascular or Ischemic Heart Diseases and Mental Disorders

On May 25, 2004, the MHLW issued its FY2003 reports on workmen's accident compensation payments for cerebrovascular

or ischemic heart diseases and mental disorders.

According to the reports, authorities approved 157 workmen's compensation claims for deaths due to cerebrovascular or ischemic heart diseases caused by overwork, the second highest number of such claims to ever be approved. The total number of approved claims, including cases with lingering complications but were not fatal, was down 1.6% from the previous year, to 312. A breakdown by industry shows that as many as one-quarter of all claims were for workers in the transportation and communications industry. By age, about 70% of all claims were for workers in their 40s and 50s.

There were 438 workmen's compensation claims filed for mental disorders, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by work-related stress, up 28.4% from the previous year (121 of these cases involved either attempted or committed suicide). Of the claims filed, 108 were



approved, up 8.0% from the previous year. This is the highest number ever approved (40 of these cases involved either attempted or committed suicide). Most of the approved claims were filed for workers classified as expert technicians, such as systems engineers, and most were for workers in their 30s.

### Results of 2003 Survey on Industrial Accidents

The 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 for the entire year of 2003, for companies with more than 100 employees.

The frequency rate of industrial accidents in 2003 (the frequency of industrial accidents expressed as the number of fatalities or injuries caused by industrial accidents per one million hours of work) was 1.78, up 0.01 points from 2002 (1.77). A breakdown by industry reveals that the transportation and communications industry had the highest accident frequency at 4.43, followed by the service industry at 3.75.

The severity rate (the seriousness of accidents expressed as the number of work days lost per 1,000 hours of work) was 0.12, the same as in 2002. A breakdown by industry reveals that the mining industry had the highest severity rate, at 0.75, followed by the transportation and communications industry at 0.22.

The average number of work days lost per injury or death was 65.1 days, down 2.1 days from 2002 (67.2 days). By industry, the mining industry had the highest number of work days lost, at 727.5 days, while the wholesale, retail and food service industry had the lowest number, at 20.9 days.

### Report Issued on Medical Knowledge of Sick Building Syndrome and Chemical Sensitivity

The MHLW established a Committee on the Health Effects of Indoor Air Quality in 2003, and has compiled a report on the medical knowledge that has been obtained from the research conducted thus far on the health effects of indoor air quality. The committee focuses primarily on sick building syndrome (SBS) and multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS)/chemical sensitivity.

SBS should be considered “a general situation in which building occupants

experience symptoms of ill-health that seem to be linked to spending time in a building,” rather than as a single medically defined illness. The report identifies the major symptoms of SBS, such as skin and mucosal irritation and various less definite complaints, as well as the factors related to the outbreak of SBS. The MHLW also issued a reminder about the indoor concentration guideline value established by the Committee on the Sick Building Problem.

A person with MCS/chemical sensitivity has a reaction or nonallergic sensitivity to minute quantities of chemical substances. This is followed by various mental and physical symptoms, which occur simultaneously or in succession, including mucosal irritation, skin inflammation, and psychotic symptoms. Much about the cause of these symptoms remains unknown, and the report broadly addresses topics on which there is a great deal of disagreement even among academic societies and other experts.

As for future issues, the committee’s findings highlight the need to disseminate accurate information in order to enlighten the general public, to foster a greater interest in and understanding of these problems among medical professionals, and to promote basic and clinical research on these problems.

### 60% of Women Leave Job before or after Birth of First Child

About 60% of working women in Japan leave their jobs before or after the birth of their first child and remain out of work for as long as 1.5 years after the birth, according to Statistics on Employment Changes before or after Childbirth from the MHLW.

The statistics show that 61.1% of mothers who held a job a year prior to childbirth left that job before or after giving birth to their first child and were still jobless 1.5 years later. Of the mothers who were employed 1.5 years after giving birth, many lived in three-generation households rather than nuclear family households, and many lived in outlying areas rather than in any of 13 major cities. Professionally certified daycare providers are primarily responsible for weekday daytime childcare for these families, but the number of fathers participating in childcare and housework activities is also relatively high. By contrast, a large percentage of mothers who were not employed 1.5 years after giving birth lived in nuclear family households where the mother is the primary caregiver. Many of these women reported extra stress, saying, “I can’t take my eyes off my child, so I never get a chance to rest.”

### More than 70% of Large Automatic Revolving Doors Taken Out of Use

Prompted by a March 2004 accident in which a child was killed by an automatic door at a building in Minato-ku, Tokyo, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT), after conducting research on large automatic revolving doors nationwide and collecting information on past accidents involving these doors, has issued a report on results.

According to this report, there are a total of 466 large automatic revolving doors installed in 294 locations throughout Japan. Of these, 206 are no longer in use, and 132 have been converted from automatic revolution to manual revolution. Inspections are being conducted at the 128 automatic revolving doors still in use, and safety measures are being taken. These safety measures include the assignment of security personnel near the doors and posted reminders to be careful when using the doors.

In addition to the incident mentioned above, there have been 270 reported accidents involving these doors nationwide. Injuries were reported in 133 cases, 23 cases of broken bones and 110 cases of bruising and other minor injuries. In the remaining 137 cases, either no injuries were reported or the cause of symptoms was unclear.

The MLIT has established an Investigatory Committee on Policies to Prevent Automatic Revolving Door Accidents to thoroughly analyze these past accidents, and will reflect its findings in guidelines to be developed in the future.



# Domestic Topics



## Online Forum Collects Practical Examples of “Safety and Health Culture”

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Office in Japan held an online forum for gathering and discussing ideas about safety and health at work.

The ILO has designated April 28 as World Day for Safety and Health at Work, and this year’s theme is “Creating and Sustaining a Safety Culture.” The forum, which began on the World Day, was implemented through a website that invited people to send in their examples of good safety and health culture practices at work, as well as new ideas and suggestions on the topic.

(See [www.ilo.org/public/japanese/region/asro/tokyo/conf/2004osh/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/japanese/region/asro/tokyo/conf/2004osh/index.htm))

In addition to the introduction of OSHMS, the establishment of a “Safety and Health Culture at Work” is a key component in the implementation of the ILO’s Global Strategy for Occupational Safety and Health, which was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2003. The 2005 International Labour Conference will include deliberations on new documents to set a new framework for promoting these activities. The content of this online forum is sure to prove useful in future discussions.

## 77th Congress of the Japan Society for Occupational Health

The 77th Congress of the Japan Society for Occupational Health, held from April 13 to 16, 2004 at the Nagoya Congress Center, attracted 2,300 participants. The theme this year was “Meeting Health Needs in Diverse Work Settings.” The congress took place in several locations and featured symposia and lectures, special reports, and speeches on strategies for promoting health and preventing disease among working people, in light of today’s increasingly diverse lifestyles. A special training session held after the conference on April 17 was attended by more than 500 people.

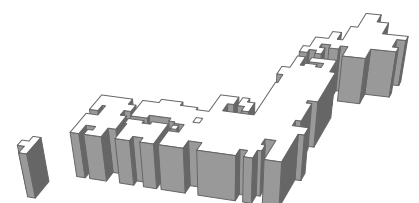
## State Loses Coal Mine Pneumoconiosis Lawsuit

On April 27, 2004, the Third Petty Bench of the Japanese Supreme Court handed down a ruling on an appeal filed in the Chikuho pneumoconiosis lawsuit, in which former workers (up through the 1970s) at the now defunct Chikuho Coal Mine who suffered from pneumoconiosis, as well as the bereaved families of those who had died from the disease, had sued both the state and the mining company for damages.

The court ruled, “No later than 1960 when the Pneumoconiosis Law was enacted, the state should have required the company to take appropriate measures such as switching to wet drilling methods in order to reduce the dust in the air. However, it violated the law by failing to require water spraying and the use of dust respirators of the company until 1986 when the ministerial ordinance under the Mine Safety Law was revised.”

Dismissing appeals filed by the state and the company, the court ruled against both defendants and awarded a total of 566 million yen in damages to about 200 plaintiffs. It took 18 years and four months for the plaintiffs in this class-action lawsuit, the first to be filed by miners against the state, in December 1985, to win their case.

This is the first time for the Supreme Court to rule that the state violated the law by failing to exercise its legal authority to regulate a business in order to prevent disasters, and to require that compensation be made pursuant to the State Redress Law.



*Published by*

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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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