

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO.
Series of 2008

POLICY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH OF WORKERS IN THE CALL CENTER INDUSTRY

Pursuant to the rule-making authority of the Secretary of Labor and Employment under Article 5 of the Labor Code, as amended, and to ensure the protection and welfare of workers employed in the call center industry, the following Guidelines are hereby issued for the guidance of and compliance by all concerned:

SECTION 1. COVERAGE. – These Guidelines shall apply to all establishments, workplaces, operations and undertakings in the call center industry.

SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS. – As used in these Guidelines, the following terms shall mean:

- a. “Call or Contact Center” refers to a central customer service operation where agents - or customer care specialists or customer service representatives - handle business-related telephone calls and other IT-related activities on behalf of a client.
- b. “Occupational Safety and Health Program” refers to planned activities aimed to prevent, eliminate, reduce or control occupational risks and hazards.
- c. “Safety and Health Committee” refers to a group of employees and management representatives concerned with the planning, policy-making, implementation and evaluation of all matters pertaining to safety and health.
- d. “Safety and Health Personnel” refers to a qualified first-aid staff, nurse, dentist, physician or safety officer engaged by the employer to provide occupational safety and health services.
- e. “Occupational Safety and Health Standards (OSHS)” refers to the set of Rules issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) which mandates the adoption and use of appropriate practices, means, methods, operations or processes, and working conditions reasonably necessary to ensure safe and healthful employment.

SEC. 3. WORKPLACE POLICY ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH. - An occupational safety and health policy shall be formulated by each establishment addressing the priority safety and health concerns in workplaces and worksites classified as call or contact centers, in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Standards (OSHS) and other related OSH issuances.

SEC. 4. COMPONENTS OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM. - The OSH program shall include:

- a. Hazard and Risk Prevention and Control to reduce the extent of exposure to hazards and to decrease the likelihood for those hazards to cause illness or injury.
- b. Capability building for members of the Safety and Health Committee to undertake risk management activities through information, training, and work environment safety and health interventions.
- c. Referral and Access to Medical and Welfare Services - Appropriate services as required under Rule 1960 of the OSHS shall be made available which would address the physical, ergonomic and psychological aspects of the work environment as well as the health and safety needs of the workers.

SEC. 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS.— The Parties herein shall have the following roles and responsibilities:

- a. The employer shall formulate and implement a suitable OSH program based on its policy and in accordance with the OSHS and other related OSH issuances, and with the Technical Guidelines on OSH for the Call Center Industry.
- b. The employer shall organize a safety and health committee pursuant to Rule 1040 of the OSHS in every workplace whose function is to develop and oversee the implementation of OSH program to include workers orientation and awareness on hazards identification, risk evaluation, prevention and control.
- c. The employer shall require their workers to undergo an Orientation Course on OSH.
- d. The employer shall provide the applicable number of safety and health personnel such as safety officer, occupational health nurse, occupational health physician and qualified first-aid staff as required by Rules 1030 and 1960 of the OSHS, and the required training for each category.
- e. The workers are enjoined to take an active role in education and training, in developing and implementing joint continuing programs and information campaigns on safety and health.

SEC. 6. SOCIAL POLICY. - The employer shall make available occupational safety and health and welfare facilities needed by qualified individuals with specific needs for workers such as pregnant or lactating women, young, older and differently-abled workers.

SEC. 7. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.- In line with the Zero Accident Program (ZAP), the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) of the DOLE shall coordinate the provision of training, information and technical assistance in the implementation of the safety and health program at enterprise level.

SEC. 8. ENFORCEMENT AND MONITORING. - The Labor Inspectorate of the DOLE Regional Offices shall be responsible for the enforcement and monitoring of the provisions of this Circular.


SEC. 9. EFFECT ON EXISTING ISSUANCES AND AGREEMENTS. – This issuance shall serve as policy and procedural guidelines for the DOLE and its agencies in the administration and enforcement of applicable labor and social legislations and their implementing regulations.

Nothing herein shall be construed to authorize diminution or reduction of benefits being enjoyed by the employees at the time of issuance hereof.

SEC. 10. EFFECTIVITY. – This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Manila, Philippines, February 27, 2008.


ARTURO D. BRION
Secretary

 Dept. of Labor & Employment
Office of the Secretary



000311