Working environment policy of the Danish Construction Association
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Translation: David Breuer
Layout: Danish Construction Association/Ditte Brøndum
Cover photo: Ditte Brøndum
Other photos: Ricky John Molloy, Nicolai Schou, Jakob Ugelvig Christiansen, Anders Bach, Mette Møller Nielsen
Printing: Jørn Thomsen Elbo A/S
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The Danish Construction Association adopts a new working environment policy

Everyone in the building and construction sector strives to ensure a good working environment every day. The sector is developing rapidly, and so are the requirements for a healthy and safe working environment. The Danish Construction Association has therefore adopted a new working environment policy that is based on and extends the changes and experiences related to both the physical and the psychosocial working environment since we developed our first working environment policy in 2008.

All actors in the construction process must take responsibility and participate in the planning and collaboration that make a good construction process. This applies to the initial ideas and sketches, detailed scrutiny, risk assessment, planning, the specific production processes at construction sites and the final operation and maintenance.

Denmark’s legislation on the allocation of responsibility between the clients, consultants, suppliers, contractors and employees is in place. The challenge now is to implement this in practice. We must find a new balance and new forms of collaboration.

The Danish Working Environment Authority was created to ensure that the regulations governing the working environment are complied with in Denmark. This sometimes lead to problems. The Danish Construction Association therefore emphasizes that companies should be treated fairly, and we also strive to maintain good relations with the Danish Working Environment Authority. This enables us to contribute to solve specific problems for our members and to exercise influence on creating a simplified set of regulations.

Striving to achieve a good working environment is a long-term investment that benefits individual employees, the sector and society.
Claus Bering
Chair, Danish Construction Association
Safe at work and safely home

Despite many years of targeted efforts, the number of work accidents in the building and construction sector is still too high.

Reducing the numerous accidents is a complex task in a sector with many changes in workplaces, partners, suppliers etc.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to get the efforts to improve the working environment integrated into how the companies carry out their core tasks; the Danish Construction Association wants a good working environment to be associated more strongly with correct procedures than correct documentation
- to compile knowledge about effective ways to manage risk and prevent accidents and to disseminate this to such actors as the sections of the Association
- to get clients, project designers, planners and consultants to take their share of responsibility for preventing occupational accidents: two thirds of these accidents result from deficiencies in project design and planning, including time schedules often being based on the needs and desires of the client instead of the feasibility of construction
- to ensure that the member companies have the appropriate tools and competencies for managing personnel, including developing effective and tailored forms of training, instruction and supervision
- to more clearly differentiate between the objective liability of the employers and the personal responsibility of the employees
In the comprehensive construction projects we carry out, we typically outsource the project design and planning to an external contractor. But we always select the project manager among our own employees, and we participate actively in the process of designing and planning the project from the start.

Further, the supervisors who carry out the construction are selected so early that they participate in the process of designing and planning the project, mostly to ensure the feasibility of construction but also to focus on the working environment aspects of the project. We select a safety coordinator in the project design and planning phase, who draws on the experience and knowledge we have developed in the organization.

The coordinator lists the problems related to the working environment that arise during project design and planning, and this results in work procedures and a plan for safety and health.

This is how we have worked systematically for several years, and our experience in involving supervisors with extensive knowledge of these types of assignments has produced excellent results.”

Signa Kyllebæk Petersen, Safety and Health Coordinator
EINAR KORNERUP A/S
Keeping the body working – for life

Hard physical work can definitely strain the human body. Nevertheless, the extent to which physical work that is carried out correctly can strengthen muscles and improve general conditioning is often underemphasized. The Danish Construction Association aims to appropriately balance physical challenges and strain such that the employees in the building and construction sector can remain in the sector for all their working years.

Employees should be involved more extensively in both developing and taking responsibility for appropriate work processes and methods of handling and management.

The clients and the project designers and planners have been given greater responsibility for predicting especially burdensome tasks in connection with their projects and for integrating solutions and specific work processes into the projects. Nevertheless, there are still great deficiencies in this area.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to get employees to participate actively in both risk assessment and planning as part of taking responsibility for ensuring safe and healthy work processes
- to get project designers and planners to more extensively consider the processes in each project that can strain the employees’ musculoskeletal system
- to get the Danish Working Environment Authority to change its inspection practice such that the specific assessment more strongly targets the actual work processes in the building and construction sector instead of solely focusing on general weight limits and work positions
The Danish Construction Association strives to get the Danish Working Environment Authority to change its inspection practice such that the specific assessment more strongly targets the actual work processes in the building and construction sector.”
Optimizing risk management and planning in the entire construction process

As employers, we are responsible for planning the work to optimize both quality and the working environment. Nevertheless, both determining and reducing the risks and the planning process begin with the client and consultants long before we start our part of the process.

The Danish Construction Association and various partners have prepared guidelines for clients and project designers and planners and created a knowledge service for project designers and planners, clients and consultants.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to bolster the development of tender documents so that they more clearly state that the client and project designers and planners must comply with the requirements mandated by law and carry out the necessary risk assessment before the project is submitted for tender
- to encourage supervision of clients and project designers and planners that is at least as strict as that applied to contractors
- to further develop the present knowledge service for project designers and planners, clients and consultants
- to strengthen the efforts of the member companies in planning
- to strengthen the understanding of the member companies (and their employees) of the delimitation between the management rights of employers and the self-management of employees
We optimize and work with processes. Meetings with supervisors, meetings with subcontractors, an overall schedule divided into plans for 3–5 weeks at a time and the like. This also means that we virtually carry out the mandated health and safety workplace assessment at the meetings with supervisors: that is, we thoroughly discuss the processes, and the supervisors commit to the plans we have prepared for the work.”

Jesper Middelbo Riise, Head of Department
HHM A/S
Well-being and collaboration

A nationwide survey on the working environment, safety and health in Denmark has shown that employees in the building and construction sector like their job. They think that it is interesting, and they have a good overview of and good control of their work. The employees have very few diagnoses related to stress, and many employees have high scores on their work capacity and health and on vitality and mental health.

Construction workers, construction supervisors and administrative personnel in construction face the special challenge of continually having to adapt to new workplaces with new tasks and new forms of collaboration across professions and functions. This requires specifically focusing on collaboration and relationships.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to more strongly emphasize the start-up efforts in the various phases of projects at construction workplaces, with meetings for everyone and targeted communication being decisive for improving the atmosphere and for achieving flexible collaboration in the entire process
- to investigate how companies in the building and construction sector can improve their opportunities to develop the interaction between well-being, productivity and collaboration
- to get the Danish Working Environment Authority to recognize that the psychosocial working environment in the building and construction sector is quite good – and to base their inspections on this fact
The Danish Construction Association strives to more strongly emphasize the start-up efforts in the various phases of projects at construction workplaces, with meetings attended by everyone and targeted communication being decisive for improving the atmosphere and for achieving flexible collaboration in the entire process.”
Chemical safety

Denmark has had a high level of preventive chemical safety for many years; one reason is the Danish code number system (MAL-KODE) for chemicals. The Danish Construction Association want to maintain this high level but faces various challenges.

One challenge is the continual marketing of new chemical products, and assessing each chemical and determining the level of risk can be difficult. Another is that the Danish code number system is outdated, since it has not been updated since 1993. Further, it has been superseded by the European Union REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemical) regulation. Finally, the legal requirement for worksite user guides needs to be reassessed.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to develop the implementation of REACH in Denmark so that it becomes easily accessible to companies: for example, by creating use scenarios that enable people to easily determine how to handle a specific substance
- to limit the formal requirements for instruction manuals at workplaces and safety and health workplace assessment related to chemicals and replace this by requirements related to function that can be more flexibly designed
- to develop more solutions based on information technology that can be disseminated more easily to each construction site
- to get companies and employees to improve behaviour related to using appropriate procedures and personal protective equipment
At Jakon A/S, we started to use air purifiers in 2009 to reduce employees’ general exposure to dust at construction sites. Dust is an especially great problem in renovating buildings.

Clients are often pleased that Jakon A/S proposes to install air purifiers to remove dust in common areas and thereby to ensure that the client’s responsibility is met. This also benefits all types of employees at the construction site.

Air purifiers are also effective for jobs with problematic dust that contains such substances as mould, PCB or lead or that require work in crawl spaces. Air purifiers can be used there and can ensure a healthy and comfortable indoor climate for employees.

Our employees are very pleased with the air purifiers, and we continually receive good feedback about the air is experienced cleaner and lighter when air purifiers have been installed. The employees especially notice that they do not need to blow their nose as frequently! But in the long term, it also means that their respiratory system is exposed to fewer harmful substances.”

Catharina Hasselby, Safety and Environment Coordinator
Jalon A/S
Inclusion – room for all

The inclusive labour market has been a topic of discussion for many years: including everyone with the appropriate qualifications, regardless of such factors as sex, religion and sexual orientation. Many construction companies make great efforts to be inclusive, especially for young people, who has been in conflict with the law.

Nevertheless, the concept of inclusion has been broadened in recent years. Many more employees that are not Danish citizens are working in Denmark, and some people consider that this could include unfair competition based on lower compensation and on lower safety and health standards.

The Danish Construction Association strives to support diversity in the building and construction sector and wants everyone who can and wants to participate in the sector to be included.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to develop methods and knowledge about how new employees, regardless of their background, can be integrated into the companies in a respectful and open manner, such as by using mentors
- to develop methods and knowledge about how training, instruction and inspections can be carried out in relation to various target groups
- to get the public authorities to maintain and develop a consistent policy of opposing unfair competition.
FA Stillads (Scaffolding) has held various types of adult vocational training courses in Horserød and Jyderup State Prisons. These courses have mostly focused on scaffolding but also on the working environment, safety and health, resolving conflicts and communication in teams. This has achieved positive results, in relation to both the opportunities for prisoners to be released into a new life without crime and the potential for the company to recruit new employees. Stefan Nyvang Kringelbach, CEO and co-owner, says:

“We have difficulties in recruiting the number of employees we need. Too few people are both trained and motivated. But the young people who have served in prison have seldom been part of a law-abiding community before, and participating in our courses improves their individual motivation. We therefore end up being able to recruit trained and motivated employees who are not solely motivated by money but also by professional pride, joy in work and the work community of which they become a part.”

Stefan Kringelbach, adm. CEO, FA stillads
Disseminating knowledge

New knowledge is created every day in the building and construction sector, both within management and in carrying out the specific tasks of the sector. Nevertheless, we are not good enough at compiling and sharing this knowledge. When one project is completed, we rush on to the next one. The managers and employees who participated gain the experience, but this is often not disseminated so that others may benefit.

The Danish Construction Association has already initiated various measures that bolster the dissemination of knowledge in general and specifically that related to the working environment: courses, networks, membership meetings and an annual conference on safety, health and environment.

We collaborate closely with the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F) on safety, health and the working environment, especially through the Sectoral Working Environment Council within Building and Construction and the Safety and Health Preventive Service Bus for the Construction Sector.

Nevertheless, the dissemination of knowledge still needs to be strengthened.

The Danish Construction Association strives:

- to ensure that member companies have access to the knowledge they need on safety, health and the working environment issues
- to ensure that member companies have access to the education and training at all levels in the experience, regulations and methods related to safety, health and the working environment
- to develop methods of training, instruction and dissemination of knowledge that support the ability and motivation of employees and supervisors to emphasize using their knowledge and experience to carry out tasks and not to place blame and responsibility
- to ensure research on the aspects of work that are relevant for a safe and healthy working environment in the building and construction sector
- to get the Danish Working Environment Authority to prepare and disseminate more specific and current statistics that can be used in the daily work of preventing accidents and promoting safety and health
The Danish Construction Association strives to develop methods of training, instruction and dissemination of knowledge. This will support the ability and motivation of employees and supervisors to emphasize using their knowledge and experience to carry out tasks and not to place blame and responsibility."
The Danish Construction Association is a trade and employers’ association within Denmark’s building and construction sector. With about 5700 member companies, the Association is diversified geographically and in terms of trades and covers all aspects of construction.

The Association’s main tasks are to influence public policy, participate in the public debate, provide consultancy services and ensure collective agreements so that the Association’s members can develop their companies optimally to benefit employment and competitiveness.