



**Protecting Workers
Health Series
No 2**

**Understanding and
Performing Economic
Assessments at the
Company Level**



**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

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Health Series
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Understanding and Performing Economic Assessments at the Company Level

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Geneva
2002

Cover design
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Design and layout
RSdeSigns.com

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Preface

This document is the second in a series of occupational health documents entitled: *Protecting Workers' Health*. It is published by the World Health Organization (WHO) within the Global Programme of Occupational Health. It is the result of the implementation effort of the Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All as agreed upon at the Fourth Network Meeting of the WHO Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health which was held in Espoo, Finland from 7-9 June 1999.

The text was prepared by TNO Work and Employment, a service organization in the areas of innovation of work, organization and technology, and employment research. TNO is a WHO Collaborating Centre in Occupational Health, and a member of the European Association of National Productivity Centres. The document was sponsored in part by the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Improvement of safety and health of workers can bring appealing economic benefits for both companies and societies as a whole. It is difficult, however, to convince employers and decision makers of the profitability of improving working conditions. An effective way is to make financial or economic estimations. This publication describes a hands-on approach that can be used in making economic assessments. After a brief introduction in Chapter 1, the most important pitfalls and explanations about relevant principles are summarized in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 provides practical outlines. References and suggestions for further reading are listed in Chapter 5.

Acknowledgement is expressed to the following reviewers: Dr. Peter Dorman of the Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington; and Dr. Regina Pana-Cryan of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.



Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 These guidelines	1
2. The background of economic appraisal in occupational safety and health	3
2.1 The economics of occupational safety and health	3
2.2 Costs and benefits for whom?	5
2.3 Economic behaviour: what motivates employers	6
2.4 Safety, health and company performance	7
2.5 What should an economic analysis do?	9
3. The context	10
3.1 Legislation, regulation and social security	10
3.2 Stakeholders and their interests	11
3.3 Internalizing costs	11
3.4 The value of health, well-being and human life	12
3.5 The problem of time	13
3.6 Perspectives	14
4. The process of making an assessment	16
4.1 Five steps	16
4.2 Step 1: Preparing an assessment	20
4.3 Step 2: Selecting variables and indicators	22
4.4 Step 3: Finding data	27
4.5 Step 4: Valuation and calculations	28
4.6 Step 5: Interpretation, use and refinement of results	32
4.7 Summary of a standard procedure	34
5. Further reading and references	37

Introduction

1

1.1 Background

By means of economic appraisal, the costs and the benefits of health, environment and safety management can be made clear at the national level, at the company level and also for the individual worker. As such it can be a useful tool in advocating good practices. Economic appraisal also shows under which circumstances economic benefits will not be sufficient for prompting preventive action in enterprises.

In recent years, a number of methods and tools for assessing the costs and benefits of occupational health have been developed. Also estimations of national costs have been made in several countries. International comparisons of methodologies and studies on relevant variables in cost-benefit assessments (at company and national level) have shown that many fundamental and practical differences exist in the purpose of eco-

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