



## **COLLABORATION BETWEEN AGENCIES AND EMPLOYERS TO REDUCE ACCIDENTS AMONG TEMPORARY WORKERS**

### **1. Organisations involved**

CRAM Languedoc-Roussillon

### **2. Description of the case**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The regional health insurance fund (CRAM) in Languedoc-Roussillon, France, wanted temporary employment agencies and employer firms to work together to reduce the number of occupational injuries occurring among temporary workers.

In 2000, at a time when the regional and national initiatives underway in this area pointed to certain changes (protective equipment made available, effective medical check-ups, induction in the enterprise), an audit revealed an inadequate analysis of most occupational injuries to temporary workers. The CRAM Languedoc-Roussillon fund therefore decided to make the safety of these employees a priority.

#### **2.2. Aims**

The objective of this action is to change attitudes concerning risk prevention for temporary workers and to reduce the number of occupational injuries among such workers.

#### **2.3. What was done, and how?**

To get away from mere administrative management of injuries, the temporary employment firms and their clients had to be encouraged to work with the same tools. Out of eight temporary work firms based in Narbonne, the CRAM knew that seven were in contact with four firms employing a large number of temporary workers: a household refuse transport company, a refrigeration firm for supermarket distribution, a ham cutting company and a wine bottling company working for the Mutualité Sociale Agricole (MSA) cooperative.

In each of these firms, therefore, the CRAM trained two people in analysis of occupational injuries. In 2001, these four enterprises signed a charter with the temporary work agencies by which they undertook to analyse all occupational injuries over a three-year period and to carry out jointly the workstation studies necessary to upgrade working conditions. The agreement signed with the CRAM fund aims to get away from attitudes such as 'I need someone at 4 o'clock in the morning, I'll call the temporary work agency who will send a guy capable of learning on the job', and instead to adopt a system of sponsorship of the temporary worker, especially for performing technical work. The temporary work agencies, moreover, have taken into account the concept of danger in firms' operations and no longer send 'just anybody'. This approach is becoming widespread in all the firms that have signed this 'CRAM agreement'.

Under this approach the temporary employment agencies present the appropriate person for the workstation concerned. The numbers of occupational injuries and days lost have been divided by three over this period.

#### **2.4. What was achieved?**

SITA's Narbonne centre is one of the signatories to the agreement. Several tasks are carried out there: household refuse collection (tip truck drivers + crew of two handling operators), collection of bulky industrial waste (truck drivers) and municipal sweeping (drivers + spray lance operators). At these risky workstations, safety is a key concern.

# CASE STUDIES

The agreement was introduced at the same time that the group decided to focus its activity on safety, which is stated as one of its quality objectives. At Narbonne, SITA employs 25 temporary workers out of a total of 70 employees. Before the introduction of this partnership, they sustained on average 13 occupational injuries throughout the year; chiefly sprains and falls.

Following internal discussion with the CRAM fund's occupational health and safety service and with the temporary employment agencies, the company initiated an action plan on working conditions. Analyses of occupational injuries, performed jointly with the temporary firms, enabled them to make improvements. For example, the use of metallic supports was adopted generally and nets have been installed on industrial waste bins to prevent the driver from entering the bin or travelling balanced on the edge. The refuse collection rounds have been modified and handling operators are now instructed not to run. Training and risk awareness raising programmes have also been carried out with the five listed temporary work agencies on the site.

Through this action another user firm has been able to improve induction and knowledge, employee integration and workstation design. It has also developed loyalty among the agencies but also among the temporary employees with which it works. Compared with the regular workforce, injuries used to be more frequent among temporary workers. Within two years of the CRAM measures, the rate of injury among temporary workers had plummeted. Temporary workers are now treated the same way as permanent workers.

Following the training sessions carried out under the agreement signed with the CRAM fund, one temporary employment agency has gone even further by organising workstation research and safety training on the premises of its largest client. As a result, occupational injuries were cut by one fourth between 2002 and 2003. When the company interviews a job applicant, a Safety Manager tests his knowledge of risk situations based on illustrated documents specific to the business. These are internal documents, called 'risk hunters'. Then the worker is given a 'safety passport' containing information on the business in which he will be working. There are booklets for the food and agriculture industry, building and construction, waste sorting and collection, etc.

## ***Problems faced***

It is hard to ensure the sustainability of the initiative: the effectiveness of the project can only be judged from a long-term perspective, which is difficult because the employees involved move about and change workplace and employer frequently.

## ***2.5. Success factors***

What made this initiative a success is the fact that temporary employment agencies and user firms were able to work closely together to achieve a common goal: greater safety for temporary workers.

At the instigation of CRAM Languedoc-Roussillon the initiative was formalised by an agreement, and practical measures were initiated for training and analysis of workstations and occupational injuries.

## ***2.6. Further information***

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### **2.7. *Transferability***

This action is transferable to other regions and other countries. However, it requires the involvement of an outside occupational health and safety service to put in place the agreement and carry out the programme.

### **3. References, resources:**

- <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/TE7809894ENC>