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Occupational health services in Japan

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ABSTRACT

The Factory Law in 1911 stipulated the inspection of occupational safety and hygiene. Its ordinance asked a large factory shall assign a safety manager and a factory physician in 1938. Since 1950's, various hazardous factors have become regulated in separate ordinances.

In 1972, Industrial Safety and Health Law was enforced, aiming to secure the safety and health of workers as well as to facilitate the establishment of comfortable working environment. It adopted the monitoring framework of a working environment and newly defined an occupational physician. Under the new law, the labour inspector's document requesting correction of the working environment has been directed to the company CEO and it can be forwarded to the prosecutors' office. The violation of the law induces administrative penalty and may also evoke a legal claim for compensation. The incidence of occupational accidents and diseases has been dramatically reduced.

Along with the economic development, many non-profit organizations for occupational safety and health was established. The basic occupational health services is delivered by general practitioners finished a training of occupational medicine by Japan Medical Association. In 1996, the law stipulated their right of advising company on the workers' health.

Workers-compensation insurance covers all employees and has a special enrollment program for the owners of small businesses. Furthermore, if a worker cannot work from sick, the universal health insurance in Japan pays 60% of the standard remuneration.