

## **State of application of laws concerning occupational health and safety in Italy in small enterprises.**

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**Keywords: small enterprises, occupational health, medical surveillance**

### **Introduction:**

Small enterprises constitute great majority of productive activities in Italy where since 1994 a large number of new laws deriving from European Directives concerning occupational medicine became compulsory. For a small enterprise activation of preventive and organizational regulations prescribed by such a relevant number of laws is surely difficult and proportionally very expensive. This fact could originate a delay in application of preventative regulations comparing with what usually happens in bigger firms.

### **Methods:**

State of application of laws concerning occupational health and safety in Italy has been evaluated in 1611 small enterprises (firms having less than 50 workers). For every enterprise we verified presence of a regular program of occupational medicine carried out by an Occupational Health Doctor according to guidelines of Italian Occupational Health Association. We also evaluated Occupational Doctors' role in risk assessment and safety control organization and promotion. We evaluated adoption of correct personal protective devices, their effective use and specific individual formation programs. We also studied problems eventually found in small firms carrying out these programs.

### **Results:**

Only in 142 (8,8%) firms evaluated we evidenced complete and adequate applications of laws. In 1127 (69,9%) firms correct occupational health programs were regularly carried out. Occupational Health Doctors have been really involved in risk assessment in 836 (51,9%) firms. Personal protective devices were adopted and currently used only in 672 (41,7%) firms. Specific individual formation programs for workers were carried out in 588 (36,4%) firms. We present data divided for different productive sectors.

### **Discussion:**

Small enterprises respect of laws concerning workers' health and safety is by now not satisfactory. A more active Occupational Health Doctors role could surely increase workers' safety and health in these firms. This result could be obtained not adopting new laws or increasing state controls but increasing employers' and employees' cultural specific level.