

## **OSH as an integral part of the general management system at the Joint Stock Company *Grindeks***

The Joint Stock Company *Grindeks* is the leading pharmaceutical company in the Baltic countries. The enterprise has two business structures applying diverse technology. At final dosage form production, hazardous chemicals (pharmaceutical actives) are applied as ingredients of small amounts and in the state of multiple dilution either with water (e.g., for injectable preparations) or inert excipients (e.g., for tablet and capsule manufacture). At the facilities of active pharmaceutical ingredients, multistage syntheses are performed with the application of different hazardous chemicals including solvents.

Occupational safety and health is significant in chemical manufacture processes which take place in pharmaceutical companies. It is necessary to minimize time of contact with hazardous chemicals for employees because many active pharmaceutical ingredients and their intermediates are very potent. Small amounts getting into human body can cause a violent impact on it. Moreover, drying and related processes involve the release of large solvent vapour amount into air. It is a complex process to make employees aware of potential hazards as well as to maintain a proper technological condition of workplaces.

To be effective and clear for all employees, OSH system has to be an integral part of the general management system. The example of JSC *Grindeks* shows that the mission of the pharmaceutical company can be not only to care about the health of patients, but also about the welfare of employees. In its entrepreneurship, *Grindeks* strives for producing efficient and safe medicines of quality. Attention is paid to measures of enhancing safety and health of employees. Occupational safety and health issues at JSC *Grindeks* are solved methodically and integrated in the work process. The company has established successful cooperation with several education establishments, by creating training programmes for the youth which secure acquirement of practical skills and prepare more professional and skilled young employees. More than 5 academic works about OSH and environment protection are elaborated annually at the company. Also risk assessment in workplaces is carried out at the company regularly with positive results – significant reduction of dangerous working places of all levels and positions. Every employee of *Grindeks* is involved in the occupational safety and health system and has the possibility to give information how working conditions could be improved.

Already in the company's social policy, OSH is stressed as an important goal of personnel policy, which provides for benefits, social guarantees, employee health and accident insurance. The employment policy also plays an important role in the management of human resources. Employees' training and the raising of qualifications are planned in accordance with the company's strategic goals and by collating the training requirements established during the company's annual professional evaluation. Particular attention is paid to mastering new technologies, *Good Manufacturing Practice*, Total Quality Management, as well the requirements and principles of environmental protection. Various problematic issues are resolved within the company by way of social dialogue, and „Grindeks”' management is always available for discussions with the employees' trade union that has been in existence ever since the company was established.

“We are aware that a properly remunerated, healthy, refreshed and positively minded employee is capable of achieving maximal results and perfectly performing his/her duties”, says Janis Romanovskis, Chairman of *Grindeks* Board.

### **SCOPE OF THE PROJECT – WHAT HAS BEEN DONE**

It is clear for the company that socially responsible and well-managed organisations provide good working conditions. Since middle 90-ies, an important task of the general management has been systematic work for risk assessment and elimination, started and developed on basis of EU Directives and seminars arranged by EU institutions, State Labour Inspection, Latvian association of testing laboratories, Baltic environmental forum, Latvian association of chemical and pharmaceutical

employers and other organizations. The process can be showed on the examples of a few significant stages:

### **1997**

- The identification and evaluation of Company's occupational hazard risks were made by Quality System Institute.

### **1997/1998**

- Risks in structural units were evaluated, and the most essential and critical risk factors were discovered. Facilities were appraised and prioritised as to their hazard risk. Starting from this phase, the medium technological staff and qualified workers were widely engaged in risk evaluation. Application of chemicals was the reason why 9 of the 10 production sites of the highest risk happened to belong to active pharmaceutical ingredients manufacture. Schedules of working place improvement were formulated.

### **1998**

- "Grindeks" received *The Latvian Quality Award* in the Large Companies Group as the most successful Latvian company in the introduction of principles of total quality management, including OSH.

### **1998/2002**

- Complex occupational safety and health audits took place at the Company to detect disparities, imperfections and their causes entailing the most serious risks. Corresponding measures and the control of their performance were implemented to correct discrepancies and deficiencies. An appraisal coefficient was introduced to compare structural units as to risk importance and trends of selected corrections.

### **2001**

- *Grindeks* was certified according to the standards of International Environment Authority's certificate ISO 14001:1996.

### **2002**

- Concurrently with the publication of the new Occupational Safety and Health Law, another phase began in the internal supervision of working environment. Regular control of working places and systematic evaluation of work environment risk factors are performed by Occupational Safety and Health Department together with site managers and specialists, attaching fiduciaries and employees
- *Grindeks* joined the International Programme of Chemical Industry, viz. Responsible Care, promising to function with the provision of high level in environment protection, safety and health for employees, consumers and public, what is regarded as a relevant and integral part of company entrepreneurship.
- JSC *Grindeks* is one of the first companies in Latvia that responded to the invitation of UN General Secretary Kofi Annan and joined the UN Global Compact that unites socially responsible business companies from all over the world. This voluntary programme is aimed at the continual improvement in the area of human rights, labour rights, the protection of the environment and anti-corruption.
- The score system of risk assessment at each working place has been implemented.

### **2003**

- *Grindeks* was the first pharmaceutical manufacturer in Latvia that received the *Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP)* certificate issued by the State Pharmaceutical Agency. Good Manufacture Practice is introduced at *Grindeks* and it regulates: the production technological

process; demands to the quality control of this process; requirements to the staff, facilities and equipment.

- *Grindeks* received the *National Good Practice Award* in work safety for the best project for improving working conditions within a company, by eradicating exposure to harmful substances.
- In 2003 during the “European Week 2003” *Grindeks* received the Certificate from the European Agency for Safety and Health.
- *Grindeks* was among the first Latvian enterprises having received “A” class permit which allows for operations with hazardous substances according to Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive.

## 2005

- Latvian Environmental Award was received for the participation in the contest "Latvian Environmental Award 2005" category "Environmentally friendly management".

## 2006

- JSC *Grindeks* received certificate ISO 9001:2000, what acknowledges the compliance of *Grindeks* quality management system with international ISO 9001:2000 standards. This achievement is a result of common efforts by the employees of *Grindeks* that demonstrates our efficiency in the development, upkeep and improvement of the quality management system.
- *Grindeks* was certified according to the new standard of the International Environment Authority’s certificate ISO 14001:1996.
- *Grindeks* received European Union programme “Leonardo da Vinci” quality award “Wings”.
- *Grindeks* received Latvian Good Practice Award for training and mentoring new employees and the partnership with schools and universities to include risk awareness education in their activities.

## 2007

- “Grindeks” received recognition and a diploma in European Week for Safety and Health at Work. Examples from “Grindeks” experience how to prevent risks were published in the issue “Safe Start for Young Workers in Practice”
- *Grindeks* inaugurated the new Analytical Scaling Laboratory, certified according to the requirements of *Good Laboratory Practice* what attests the compliance of this laboratory with the highest laboratory standards of the world.
- *Grindeks* received the recognition of “Efficient Management Award” in the nomination “The Best Corporate Management Enterprise” for the implementation of the principles of corporate governance at the Company.

In the OSH management, special attention is given to occupational risk assessment. To exclude the impact of hazardous chemicals on employees, there is a documented procedure of working environment risk evaluation which includes all phases of risk appraisal and recording results as well as planning occupational safety and health measures and the control of their implementation.

**Labour safety issues at *Grindeks* are solved methodically and integrated in the work process.** Occupational risk assessment is carried out regularly twice per year and after significant changes for working places where chemicals are used. Interviews with specialists and workers and measurements are the basis of risk evaluation. A wide range of testers and sensors are available at the company to perform measurements at working areas. Environmental Control Group determines emissions and the actual environmental situation.

To compare facilities and particular risk factors, a risk index has been introduced at the Company. This index shows the total risk level at a particular working place. If the total risk index is about 20 or more, preventive measures are usually necessary; if it exceeds 60, urgent occupational safety measures must be performed to improve working environment. A comparison shows that the group of chemical risk factors commonly has the highest risk indices, and preventive measures must be regularly performed. Discrepancies, risk sources and reasons causing a major or elevated risk as well as already implemented preventive measures intended to reduce the risk down to acceptable level are recorded.

On basis of risk evaluation, a schedule of labour protection measures is compiled where measures necessary for working environment improvement, their implementation terms and the responsible persons are entered.

**Solutions for risk elimination or reduction are prioritized, too:**

1. First, an option of the substitution of more hazardous chemical with less hazardous is considered.
2. To decrease the impact of the hazardous chemical on the employees, it is isolated as far as possible – the corresponding equipment is improved.
3. Engineering techniques and other means of collective protection, e.g. improved ventilation are applied.
4. Individual measures are applied to reduce the impact of hazardous substance on employees.

Almost always concurrent organizational undertakings and training are expedient which bring real effect.

**Some examples of each of the above principles resulting in essential improvement of Company's working environment are the following:**

1. Hazardous chemicals (solvents) are replaced with less hazardous ones.
2. Equipment is installed (for loading chemicals into a dryer and drying) which prevents a direct contact of employees (workers) with the chemical (product).
3. The quality and efficiency of ventilation is improved. Besides increased air exchange, the right flow direction from the clean area of the room towards the contamination source is created.
4. Employee's (worker's) direct protection from the impact of working environment with the application of individual protective equipment and non-standard measures, e.g. special extraordinary health examination.

Understanding attitude and support of JSC *Grindeks* management together with the involvement of each employee is a warrant of OSH system success leading to continuous improvements to promote safe and health – friendly working environment in company. It is not only the objective of Latvia OSH Development Programme 2007-2010 but is one of the main conditions for sustainable development of JSC *Grindeks*.