



## Case study for the prevention of work related slips, trips and falls

### “ON THE RIGHT FOOT CAMPAIGN – AKTION: SICHERER AUFTRITT”

Available at: <http://www.dguv.de/inhalt/leistungen/index.html>

#### **History/ Background:**

The Berufsgenossenschaften or institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention, assume liability for the consequences of occupational accidents, commuting accidents and occupational diseases in Germany. Accidents that occur during leisure time can only be covered by a private accident insurance. At present there are 26 Berufsgenossenschaften divided according to the branch of industry with which they are concerned. The law states that their prime responsibility is to prevent occupational accidents and diseases, to eliminate work-related health hazards, and, should an insured event occur, to compensate the injured person, the relatives or the surviving dependants.

The background of the campaign was a daily total of almost 1,000 occupational accidents in Germany caused by tripping, slipping or falling: a situation with huge economic relevance. Many of the accidents, which are frequently trivial, have severe consequences. Each year, some 50,000 of these accidents necessitated in-patient treatment. 5,000 of the accident victims suffered permanent injury, resulting in a BG disability pension. The annual costs to the BGs were in the order of 330 million Euro. With the campaign “On the right foot” (“Aktion: Sicherer Auftritt”) the BGs have proved that prevention campaigns are successful<sup>1</sup>. On 28 April 2003, the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, the BGs - the German institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention - launched their national prevention campaign in Berlin under the heading “Sicherer Auftritt” (“on the right foot”).

**Goals and objectives:**

The aim of the campaign was to reduce slipping, tripping, and falling accidents at the workplace by 15 percent within two years and to shed light on the causes of these types of accidents. The BGs intended to concentrate more closely upon worker behaviour itself. Without pointing the finger, they aimed to raise awareness among employers and employees alike to the risk - one which is underestimated - of falling accidents.

**Target population:**

Slips, trips and falls are the largest cause of occupational accidents in all sectors from heavy manufacturing through to office work. So all workers have been target population for the campaign.

**General design/setting:**

Advertising images, designed to shock, are to address the broader public, and have been displayed for this purpose on 200 buses in over 90 towns and cities throughout Germany. At the same time, the BGs were launching sector-specific campaigns within companies themselves. 2,500 prevention experts (normally trained inspectors) have made some 700,000 visits to companies in order to present the subject in depth by a lot of different medial materials (audio, video, dvd etc), 400.000 employers, safety officers and employees have been informed of the campaign at 36 BG training centres. These measures have been supported by comprehensive information on the Internet at [www.sicherer-auftritt.de](http://www.sicherer-auftritt.de) and in the BGs' publications (see reference 1), which have a national circulation of 4.3 million. A hotline, the "BG-Infoline", has been set up to deal with urgent inquiries.

Anni Friesinger, Olympic medallist in speed skating and several times world champion, was lending her support to the "Sicherer Auftritt" campaign. This was at this time the German contribution to the worldwide campaign conducted by the United Nations, which supported the campaign by the German BGs through the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**Duration:**

The campaign had started in 2003; because accident prevention is an ongoing activity the materials of the campaign are still used in preventive actions.

**Resources:**

The campaign was launched and financed by the accident insurances of Germany. The statutory accident insurance constitutes an exception in the German Social security System: here contributions are paid by the employers only as the Berufsgenossenschaften accept liability for the companies' risks. The Berufsgenossenschaften or institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention assume liability for the consequences of occupational accidents, commuting accidents and occupational diseases. Accidents that occur during leisure time can only be covered by a private accident insurance. The BGs perform their prevention tasks successfully, as the figures show:

- since 1970, the number of "reportable accidents" has decreased by 56% and the number of "fatal accidents" by 75%;
- at the same time, contribution rates fell from 1.51 to 1.16% of payrolls, making statutory accident insurance the only social security segment to see a sustained decrease in contribution rates; and
- the forecasts confirm that this trend is set to continue.

If the accident rate were still at the 1992 level, the BGs would have had to pay out around 800 million euros more in compensation for the occupational accidents in 2005 alone. The investment in the campaign is linked to expectations that successful prevention reduce the premiums further.

**Evaluation: Behaviour Changes by short training courses:**

During the campaign the BGIA – a research institute of the BGs - has carried out a research project titled: "On The Right Foot": assessment of behavioural change among participants in short

training courses. By observing the behaviour of the participants on a training parcours it was possible to gain information for behaviour changes.

The effect of the short training courses held during the "On The Right Foot" campaign upon the behaviour of the training participants was evaluated in a controlled study (systematic behavioural observation on an obstacle course). The study evaluated whether the knowledge had been transferred to everyday situations. Systematic behavioural observation was conducted comparing participants of the short training courses and untrained persons.

The present study found only limited evidence that the short training course influenced the actual day-to-day behaviour of the test persons. Observation of the individual stages of the "obstacle course" revealed no significant differences in behaviour between persons who had followed such a course of training and those who had not. When all stages were considered together, however, significant differences in behaviour were observed. The desired behaviour was more evident amongst the group of persons who had received training. The principle followed on the training course, (i.e. encouraging participants to be proactive and raising their awareness of unsatisfactory arrangements) was found to be only partly effective as reflected in the observed behaviour.

Further results relate to the test persons' familiarity with the activities and to their behaviour. A correlation between these factors could not be confirmed: whether or not an individual frequently climbs and descends stairs has little demonstrable influence upon the use (or not) of the hand rail, as does whether their vocational activity is primarily mental or physical in nature. Nor was a significant correlation observed between age and safety-conscious behaviour. The study provided only limited evidence that a brief training course alone is sufficient to influence the actual behaviour of individuals in the circumstances stated, since behaviour cannot be modified by information alone.

The brief training courses comparable in their scale and structure and conducted as part of annual safety training in

companies were found to be beneficial supplements to more comprehensive measures (actions on work site level) but not of themselves (i.e. to have a decisive influence upon human behaviour). On the assumption that the random sample studied consisted solely of individuals vocationally active in the area of occupational health and safety, action is needed at this point in order to exploit the model role of these groups of individuals. (<http://www.hvbg.de/e/pages/presse/archiv/archiv05/sturz.html>)

### **Results (June 2005):**

26 percent fewer tripping, slipping and falling accidents: the outcome of the "Aktion: Sicherer Auftritt" ("On The Right Foot" campaign). All accidents have to be recorded; the decrease of recorded accidents was an excellent indicator about the success of the campaign.

With this prevention campaign, the BGs have endeavoured over the past two years to address a particular focus of accidents in all sectors.

In absolute figures: the 191,000 occupational accidents during 2002 caused by tripping, slipping or falling, two years later, were barely 141,000. These figures might be a proof of the campaign's success.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Campaigning is a useful tool for injury prevention; the lessons learned from this campaign will be used in the frame of the new German OSH strategy in which the reduction of accidents by 25% to the year 2012 is demanded.

Lessons learned by the statutory accident insurance (BGs):

- Occupational safety and health (OSH) is a commitment, which must be fulfilled in and by enterprises. The statutory accident insurances use all suitable means to support employers and insured in the fulfilment of that commitment.
- Prevention policies should be designed to be effective and cost-efficient. They must adapt to the innovation processes and structural change in industry as well as to the impacts of new technologies and altered forms of work.

- The statutory accident insurances primarily base their joint and industry-specific prevention activities on an assessment of working conditions in the specific case concerned and align them, in particular, with the insights they gain and lessons they learn
  - in their consulting work for and inspection of enterprises,
  - from patterns of accident and occupational-disease incidence,
  - in their rehabilitation and compensation activities and
  - from the experiences of the BGs' board of directors.
  - Small and medium-sized enterprises are extremely prevalent in German industry. The BGs develop prevention policies tailored to the needs of such companies, taking into account special features of the sectors in which they operate.
  - The constant decline in the number of accidents at work is attributable, above all, to successful prevention. The prevention activities need to be designed and enhanced in a way, which tackles all of the major risks to life and health at the workplace. To this end, the BGs are increasingly using incentive systems.
  - The BGs support joint institutions and cross-industry tasks in the field of prevention, e.g. prevention committees, priority activities and research.
  - The BGs work with other OSH institutions, in particular, the governmental bodies and committees active in the area of prevention.

---

Drafted by:  
Karl Kuhn, Federal Institute for Occupational Health,  
Strategy and principle affairs (BAUA), DE