

Factors Influencing the Implementation of RPD Programmes in the Workplace

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HSL recently carried out a qualitative study examining Respiratory Protective Device (RPD) programmes in a cross-section of industry in the UK. In addition to assessing the quality of the RPD programmes, formal and informal interviews with management and wearers were conducted to gain an understanding of the decision-making process on the implementation of an RPD programme and what factors influence whether the wearers correctly use the issued RPD.

Considerable variation was found in RPD user competence and the control of respiratory risks. Four groups of companies were identified:

The Learners – These companies had recently begun developing their RPD programme but were not fully aware of all the steps necessary for adequate exposure control. Managers were in the process of establishing a formal RPD programme whilst continuing to develop their own knowledge in the area.

The Developers – These companies had an RPD programme in place and were generally aware of what they needed to do to protect workers against respiratory disease. They still had some way to go, however, with actual implementation of their programme.

The Fortuitous – In these companies workers were protected against respiratory hazards despite a significant RPD knowledge and skills gap at the managerial level, accompanied by the absence of a structured RPD programme.

The Proficient – These companies had an effective RPD programme; managers had an acceptable level of RPD competence and controls did appear to be working.

This presentation gives a summary of the work and its findings focusing on some of the main barriers to the implementation of an effective RPD programme from the management and wearer's perspective and suggests a number of actions that may lead to improvement in such programmes.