

Legislation on Maternity Protection at Work and Classification of Reproductive Hazards in Japan

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The proportion of female employee in Japan has been increasing constantly during three decades and they have more opportunities of working in manufacturing workplace than before. Hence, the importance of the maternity protection and the risk reduction of reproductive hazards at work has been emphasised. This keynote speech will overview Japanese occupational health policies on maternity protection with some background information regarding the classification of the reproductive toxicity.

There are two important legislations in Japan to provide safe and healthy workplace for female workers in relation to maternity protection. The Act on Securing, etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment explains the promotions of measures to ensure the health of female workers with regard to employment during pregnancy and after childbirth. Labour Standard Act stipulates limitations on dangerous and injurious work for expectant and nursing mothers. The Regulation on Labour Standard for Women stipulates the exact conditions for the protection of female employees based on Labour Standard Act.

Besides, Japan Society for Occupational Health (JSOH) annually announces the classification of chemical substances with adverse effects on the sexual function, the fertility, and the development of offspring based on the reproductive toxicity reported by epidemiological and toxicological studies. This list has significant impact on Japanese government and industrial organisation; however, JSOH sometimes receives criticism from industrial organisations. For example, the classification of di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate as the reproductive toxicant was recently criticised by a chemical company.

These legislations and classifications of reproductive toxicant may play more important roles for the promotion of maternity protection at work in Japan.