

Promoting a Safety Culture

According to the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia a workplace is defined as the physical location where someone works. Such a place can range from a home-office to a large office building or factory. The Safety and Health and Work Act of Barbados 2005-12 defines a workplace as "any place where persons work or are employed including a factory, but does not include a private household where persons work or are employed only in domestic service."

Based on both of these definitions, it is clear that schools and other operations where business is conducted would mean that they easily fall under the definition of a workplace. It therefore means that every occupier or employer of a place of business has a responsibility to the persons who work and traverse the workplace. This is recognized in the Safety and Health and Work Act of Barbados 2005-12, where it places the responsibility of the occupier and/or employer to:

- (a) keep his workplace so that the safety of persons in the workplace is not likely to be endangered;
- (b) take such precautions as are reasonable in the circumstances to ensure the safety of every person in the workplace; and
- (c) ensure that all employees with special needs shall be given any directions, notices, information and instructions or training that are required to be given to employees under this Act, by any method of communication that readily permits the employee to receive it.

Workplace can be subjected to both environmental and industrial hazards, and it is because of this that the promotion of safety at the workplace ought to be a continuous practice. Employers by law are held accountable for the safety and welfare of their employees at the workplace, and therefore it imposes a responsibility on them to ensure that safe systems of work and safe practices are followed. For the purpose of compliance, some employer may go as far as putting the basic requirements that the law requires. Employers or occupiers should be guided by the need to adopt measures that would serve the interest of their organization. There is also a need for them to go further towards ensuring that there are monitoring systems and enforcement mechanisms in place.

In a small society and economy where micro and small businesses are prevalent, it is commonplace to find many individuals working from home. In some cases these operations are not registered businesses. It therefore raises the question as to whether these operations fall outside the scope of the law. It would appear that the responsibility lies squarely at the feet of sole proprietor to follow standard safety practices. In today's world home working has become a norm, and so it is important

that an education awareness programme is directed at these individuals, who in their quest to be gainfully employed are not acquainted with the expected safety and health standards.

Whilst the need is recognized for attention to be paid to promoting a safety culture amongst those operating from home, it must be underscored that employers in the traditional work places where persons occupied buildings away from home, it is important to practice fire and other evacuation drills.