Safety and health of workers: protection against risk from explosive atmospheres

1995/0235(COD) - 18/09/1995 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to set and harmonise the minimum requirements for improving the safety and health protection of workers potentially at risk from explosive atmospheres; to create a framework for industry, in general, of protection against explosions equivalent to that which exists for the extractive industry. CONTENT: - field of application: exclusion from the field of the Directive's scope of medical environments, appliances burning gaseous fuels, handling of explosives, the use of means of transport to which the pertinent provisions of international agreements and implementing Community Diretives apply, and extractive industries; - definition of an explosive atmosphere; - employer obligations: prevention of and protection against explosions, assessment of explosion risks. To respect these obligations, the proposal lays down technical requirements with which work equipment and the workplace must comply. A document regarding protection against explosions will be drawn up by the employer who assesses the risks. - The employer is required to classify places (in the workplace) by zone (described in Annex I) where workers are likely to be exposed to explosive atmospheres and has to apply minimal requirements (outlined in Annex IIa). These positions have to be duly indicated (Annex III). Transitional provisions are laid down for existing workplaces and equipment (those considered safe may continue to operate). From 01.07.2003, all equipment put into service for the first time would have to conform with the Directive (transitional periods of 3 years are provided for workplaces that are already used). - A Vademecum will be drawn up describing how the requirements of this Directive will be applied by the Council. The Directive provides for measures regarding the information and consultation of workers. The date for transposition of the Directive is set at 31.12.1997. - Annex I: classification of zones at risk: maximum conformity with existing international (ISO) standards and the taking into consideration of explosive atmospheres in the form of a combustible dust cloud in the air; - Annex IIA: requirements including organisational measures (obligation to have a sufficient number of qualified workers - work permits - written instructions), the evaluation of risks of explosion, the principles for the design of new or the modification of existing installations, protection measures against explosions (comparable to those that exist in Directive 94/9/EC on protection equipment and systems used in explosive atmospheres); - Annex IIb: correspondence between the categories defined in Directive 94/9/EC and the various work zones of this Directive; Annex III: presentation of a system of uniform signs for dangerous places (application of the 'EX' symbol); - Annex IV (not binding): indicative criteria for the execution of works in the zones; - Annex V: non-exhaustive list of subjects to be dealt with in the Vademecum drawn up in agreement with the Council.