

Nanoparticles in the Workplace: Health and Safety Precautions (2009/01 E)

The advisory report Nanoparticles in the Workplace: Health and Safety Precautions is the response of the Working Conditions Committee of the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) to the request for advice sent to the Council by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) on 5 September 2008. That request for advice concerns how to deal with the uncertainties related to the risks associated with nanotechnology, in particular with persistent synthetic nanoparticles, in an occupational environment.

The Committee's central concern is with the health and safety of employees who are required to work with nanoparticles in the workplace. It is the employer that bears primary responsibility for this in the light of its duty of care as set forth in the Working Conditions Act. The basic principle is that substances attended by uncertain or unknown risks – which includes nanoparticles – should be treated as hazardous (or extremely hazardous) substances. This means that the policy and implementation measures in such cases should focus on preventing or minimising exposure of employees to those substances.

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