Occupational Health and Safety (OHS): Conditions and factors affecting health and safety in the engineering workplace. Occupational health and safety studies aim to protect workers from the risks of occupational diseases and accidents, and provide better working environments. However, there are two issues that should not be neglected: increasing efficiency by providing production safety; and providing enterprise safety. The identification and implementation of measures to minimize losses related to occupational accidents and vocational illnesses is termed “occupational safety”. The field of occupational health and safety in Turkey involves regulations and legislation enacted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Some of these laws and regulations were enacted following law number 4857, whereas others were enacted under the previous law, 1475. Worldwide, construction workers face double the risk of injury and three times the risk of death compared with workers in other sectors. The accident rate within the construction sector in Turkey is higher than in European countries. Workplace accidents cause loss of labor force, and even the lives of many workers, as well economic losses, which imposes costs on workers, employers, and society. Nevertheless, occupational safety awareness remains low within the Turkish construction sector. A significant part of the sector is indifferent to the issue, and only major construction enterprises give importance to OHS issue and employ specialists trained in this field. Construction workers encounter important problems regarding occupational health and safety due to factors such as the short-time and dynamic nature of construction works, significant variations in working conditions between different enterprises, the diversity of tasks and the presence of risks distinctive to each, the presence of more than one employer and/or sub-employer on-site, and high employee turnover. The statistics regarding occupational accidents and vocational diseases are a reflection of the implementation of occupational health and safety, and should be examined in order to demonstrate the state of sector. In Turkey, OHS courses are included in the undergraduate curriculum of 55 different engineering–architecture faculties, 32 state university science faculties, and 3 private universities. Course lengths are between two and three hours per week, and total course loads of engineering–architecture and science students are 26 hours for one semester. There are significant differences between curriculums, and course titles include: OHS, occupational safety, workplace safety, industrial hygiene, professional knowledge for decision and risk analysis in
engineering and laboratory safety, risk management, occupational accidents and first aid, technical safety and worker’s health. At the higher education level, only 36 PhDs were completed in the OHS field by 2010. However, these numbers increased when the Ministry of Labor and Social Security permitted individuals with OHS education at post-graduate or PhD level to enter specialty OHS examinations without the requirement to undergo further training. The “Regulation regarding the Duty, Authority, Responsibility and Education of Occupational Safety Specialists” (Official Journal no. 27768, 27.11.2010; Ministry of Labor and Social Security) states that engineers, architectures or technical staff who have a Master’s-level qualification in occupational health and safety or the occupational safety field, and pass the class-B occupational safety specialist examination, can receive a Class-B Certificate for Occupational Health and Safety Expertise; those with a PhD in the same fields, and who pass the class-A occupational safety examination can receive a Class-A Certificate.