

IOHA Statement on Control Banding

Background:

Control Banding schemes have been developed to allow users to quickly determine proper controls for worker protection (substitution with less hazardous agents; modification of work practices and engineering controls; and the selection and use of appropriate personal protective equipment) based on readily available information on agents' health hazards, exposure potential based on exposure determinants, and current controls. The schemes are primarily intended for use by small and medium sized enterprises that lack professional occupational hygiene or toxicological expertise, but are also used by skilled occupational hygiene professionals, primarily as a screening tool in the exposure assessment process. The intent of control banding schemes is to provide a level of worker protection consistent with the level of protection that would be identified by skilled occupational hygiene professionals using more robust scientific based techniques. As a caution, the user of these control banding schemes should attempt to obtain information to determine if the scheme is applicable to their specific need.

Issues and Opportunities:

The prevention of workers' exposure to risks to health, safety and well being is one of IOHA's key objectives. IOHA recognizes that control banding techniques offer a relatively simple, low-cost tool for preventing and controlling exposure to workplace risks, especially in sectors of industry and in countries where the services and expertise of occupational health and safety professionals may not be readily available or affordable.

IOHA acknowledges that although control banding may be applied inappropriately in some workplaces which lack access to occupational hygiene expertise, IOHA also recognises that significant exposure reductions can be achieved in many workplaces with relatively basic, but very task specific, control guidance.

IOHA supports the continued development and refinement of control banding methodologies as a valuable tool for controlling exposure to chemical, biological, physical, ergonomic, safety and psycho-social risks in the workplace and the environment. In particular, IOHA supports the development of industry and occupation-specific applications of control banding.

IOHA recognizes that control banding methodologies do not provide a solution for every occupational health and safety risk scenario, and that control banding should incorporate and complement other more well-established exposure limit and assessment methodologies and control strategies and that control banding should not be considered a replacement for these methodologies.

Users of control banding must be informed clearly about the limitations of the method, and that control banding does not provide a solution for every exposure situation. In particular, users must

understand that the control banding approach may be too simplistic for certain highly hazardous situations, and that in these circumstances, the user should seek more detailed information and the support of a professional occupational hygienist.

IOHA recognizes that the further development and validation of control banding and related risk management and control measure information is essential for the successful implementation of REACH legislation, as a number of control banding models are used as Tier 1 methods for estimating worker exposure.

Initiatives:

Therefore, IOHA supports the following initiatives to improve and advance Control Banding methodologies:

- continuing work to validate control banding methodologies and to calibrate them against existing more well-established assessment and control methodologies, which are derived from more rigorous toxicological and epidemiological studies;
- research to study and test situations where control banding has been implemented, to verify that the required degree of control has been achieved;
- development of tools and guidance to assist users to validate control banding results, by the use of bibliographic sources of data and by sampling and measurement, to ensure that the results of the control banding process are appropriate for the activity being evaluated;
- promotion of control banding methodologies to meet the needs of economies and employers with limited resources, which maximize the fraction of those resources used to implement workplace exposure controls which have been shown to provide significant exposure reduction. These may include substitution by less hazardous agents and modifications to work practices, as well as engineering controls;
- international exchange of information on experiences using control banding methodologies, the exchange of data on exposure estimates reached by the use of control banding, and on the validation of these estimates by traditional measurement and bibliographic sources, and on the effectiveness of control measures in reducing exposures, so as to develop and disseminate reliable information on the best available control technologies;
- organisation of workshops, conferences and similar events to facilitate further development and refinement of fundamental control banding principles and applications; and to spread awareness of the benefits that control banding has to offer as a tool for improving the health, safety and welfare of workers worldwide.