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It might not know it, but the world needs the skillset of occupational hygienists right now. IOHA president, Karen Niven talks to Mamta Patel about her mission to get the word out.

As current president of the International Occupational Hygiene Association, Karen Niven, global health, risk and governance manager at Shell, says her overriding aim is to facilitate better understanding of the occupational health profession and the role it can play in business sustainability.

Dr Niven has experience of many different roles. She has worked for public and private sector organisations, run her own business, and been in academia. She is in touch with scientists from many disciplines and business managers all over the world. Her aim is to make others see what she can see clearly – that there is a group of professionals within companies whose skills are often not used smartly and who should be far more integrated into company strategy, whether it be in R&D, purchasing and marketing, or providing input into discussions about their company’s future products.

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg set governments on a course to minimise the adverse effects of manmade chemicals on human health and the environment by 2020. The response has been an unprecedentedly fast modernisation of national chemicals regulatory schemes. These have created new and complex challenges for companies across supply chains. Occupational hygienists have a bigger role to play in this movement, she feels.

What are the skills that hygienists bring to the table? There are three core components – they recognise and understand hazards, they are expert at assessing exposure and they are trained in knowing how to design the right controls to minimise the risk.
“If ever the world needed people with this mix of skills, it is now,” Dr Niven says.

Yet to many, the traditional image of hygienists is folk with a clipboard in hand checking compliance with health and safety rules and responding to incidents. That image significantly understates the role that hygienists could play, she says. For example, she jokes, as we sit talking in a hotel cafe, “a hygienist can walk into this or any other restaurant and within seconds, they will have subconsciously picked up enough clues to tell you how well managed its kitchen is.”

As businesses respond to growing regulatory and customer pressure to buy, make, use and sell safer chemicals in products, hygienists have useful insight to contribute at every step. This is why, she says, hygienists in the US are now driving forward recognition that they are ideally equipped to become companies’ product stewards, for example with the creation there of the Product Stewardship Society (see page 4).

She illustrates her thinking with two examples. When a company purchases a product with an accompanying safety data sheet, too often the product is chosen largely for its performance specification and/or cost. While companies may involve their toxicologists to understand the hazards described, hygienists may or may not be involved. Yet the hygienist will be able to understand not only the toxicological advice, but also have a real-world understanding of how staff may become exposed to the product and what the implications of using it may be for the

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control measures that will be necessary. They can also advise on whether an alternative product with a different hazard profile would make life simpler and safer for staff.

The second example is of a company designing a product to sell. Hygienists can work closely with toxicologists to feed in expertise on potential exposure routes and help to optimise the design of the product to maximise its safety profile.

Hygienists have been trained to anticipate the likely customer behaviour that may give rise to risks

With regulatory demands increasing globally, early “joined up thinking” of this kind can help to improve a product’s market prospects, Dr Niven feels. Hygienists have been trained to anticipate the likely customer behaviour that may give rise to risks – whether products are for industrial or consumer use – and know what control measures can realistically be applied. This insight will help to minimise the chances of something going wrong and leading to potentially costly impacts for the company in terms of brand damage, regulatory non-compliance, recall costs and even litigation.

IOHA, as a global umbrella body for 33 associations (4 have joined in 2016 alone: Argentina; Vietnam; Indonesia and Colombia), has a duty to put occupational hygiene on the chemical safety map, she feels. It can do this by engaging with international institutions such as the UN, OECD and World Health Organization and facilitating opportunities for its member associations to contribute their experiences and viewpoints to the many challenges being tackled.

Moreover, says Dr Niven, with its transboundary remit to work with bodies like the Occupational Health Training Association and Workplace Health Without Borders, IOHA can help to drive safety as an issue in emerging and developing economies (see page 7).

She points out that the priority under IOHA’s five-year strategy – agreed last year – is to promote occupational hygiene. It will do this by seeking new opportunities to communicate with external partners, optimising its procedures and capabilities, and creating effective networking and knowledge sharing mechanisms for members.

Events

American Industrial Hygiene Conference and Exposition (AIHce)
21-26 May, Baltimore, US
Co-located with Stewardship 2016, organised by the Product Stewardship Society

Measurement of Occupational Exposure
10 June, Lille, France
Joint conference between Société Française des Hygiénistes du Travail (SOHYT; French Occupational Hygienists Society) and the Belgian Society for Occupational Hygiene (BSOH)

EuroSafety 2016
13-15 September, Tampere, Finland
The Finnish Occupational Hygiene Society (FOHS) will be exhibiting and will also hold a short seminar during the event.

Occupational and Environmental Exposure of Skin to Chemicals (OEESC)
19-21 September, Manchester, UK

XVII Symposium of the Polish Occupational Hygienists Association on current issues
25-27 October, Lodz, Poland

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)
Fall Conference
24-25 October, San Antonio, US

The 2016 Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIIOH) Annual Conference and Exhibition, Hygiene that works
3-7 December, Gold Coast, Australia

Visit our website for an up to date list of events: www.ioha.net/ioha-events

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IOHA Newsletter 2 June 2016
Members’ round up

Société Française des Hygiénistes du Travail

The Société Française des Hygiénistes du Travail (SOFHYT), will be at the Préventica Exhibition in Lille, France, from 7-9 June. This year, the event is being co-hosted with the Belgian Society for Occupational Hygiene (BSOH), so it will be a good opportunity to meet representatives of French speaking occupational hygienists.

SOFHYT has proposed a conference for occupational hygienists dedicated to control health risks on 8 June.

SOFHYT and BSOH are also jointly organising a conference forum on the measurement of exposure of workers on 10 June. The full agenda and registration can be found here.

British Occupational Hygiene Society

In September, the British Occupational Hygiene Society will host a conference on occupational and environmental exposure of skin to chemicals (OEESC).

The first OEESC conference took place in Washington, DC, in 2002. Since then it has taken place every 2-3 years and has become a platform for exchange of new scientific discoveries and practical ideas from around the globe. The exchange of information from the multidisciplinary participants has enabled steps forward in prevention of ill health due to skin exposure. This year’s OEESC will take place from 19-21 September, at the Manchester Conference Centre, UK.

British Occupational Hygiene Society

The British Occupational Hygiene Society and the Occupational Hygiene Society of Ireland are collaborating to organise a two-day conference on exposure control and containment, following the success of their first joint event in 2014.

Taking place on the 12-13 October, Exposure Control and Containment II, will focus on the specification, design, installation, testing, maintenance and operation of engineering control measures to minimise health risks in the workplace.

It is aimed at people involved in these aspects of exposure control and will appeal to delegates from various industry sectors – small and large – including electronics, engineering, construction, pharma, fine chemicals, oil and gas, education and others.

Successful control of exposure relies on effective partnerships between a range of disciplines. Correct specification and design alone will not guarantee adequate exposure control – performance is also impacted by factors such as acceptance by the end-user, the adequacy of maintenance arrangements and human factors.

The conference presents an opportunity for individuals from different disciplines to come together and build mutual understanding on the various facets of this complex and interesting topic.

As in 2014, a small trade exhibition will run alongside the conference.

Polish Industrial Hygienists Association & the Institute of Occupational Medicine

The Polish Industrial Hygienists Association and the Institute of Occupational Medicine are hosting a meeting on current issues facing occupational health in Lodz, Poland.

The meeting will include presentations on a wide range of issues from carcinogens, nanomaterials and allergens, to hazards relating to specific substances such as arsenic and formaldehyde.

Polish and EU legislation governing occupational hygiene, including issues associated with standards, women’s health and the entry into force of Seveso III, will also be discussed. The meeting will run from 25-27 October.

Finnish Occupational Hygiene Society

The Finnish Occupational Hygiene Society (FOHS) will have a stand at the trade fair EuroSafety 2016, which runs from 13-15 September in Tampere, Finland. The Society will also run a short seminar during the event.
Sustainable companies need product stewards

As companies improve their sustainability credentials they will look increasingly to qualified product stewards. Dr Steven Lacey and Kali Frost describe how the US product stewardship community aims to meet the demand.

Companies are increasingly interested in the lives of their products. From earliest design concept to end-of-life management, sustainability is being treated as a key priority. But for such product stewardship to be effective, you need employees with the right skills and experience.

The evidence suggests that sustainability is good for business. In 2007 a Goldman Sachs report found that share prices for sustainability leaders are, on average, 25% higher than those of their competitors. Five years later the global electronics company Siemens surveyed CEOs at large US companies. More than half of respondents reported they were marketing green products and services and requesting sustainability information from vendors along their supply chain.

Furthermore, product stewardship can serve as a powerful recruitment tool. A 2015 Millenial Impact Project survey showed 90% of millennials (people born between 1980-2000) want to “use their skills for good”. In 2012 Forbes reported a study by Deloitte of 1,000 of its millennial employees, which found that “more than half believed that business will have a greater impact than anyone else in solving society’s biggest challenges”. This adds up to increasing influence by product stewards in corporate America. Nowhere is this more evident than among the more than 250 companies that take part in the American Chemistry Council’s Responsible Care initiative. Global chemical stewardship has been further developed and expanded as part of the global product strategy from the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA). In 2007, the ICCA published its Product stewardship guidelines, which describe how companies of all sizes can design and implement chemical product stewardship programmes.

The core proposition

In a world of rapidly evolving consumer values, society is demanding that products are not only high quality, but environmentally sustainable, safe and healthy for workers and consumers, as well as socially responsible. The product stewardship profession embodies these values. Indeed, the Product Stewardship Society (PSS) has taken as its definition of the practice “responsible management of the health, safety, and environmental aspects of raw materials, intermediate, and consumer products throughout their lifecycle and across the value chain in order to prevent or minimise negative impacts and maximise value”.

Product stewardship as a business critical driver with potential to impact the very core of an organisation

In its 2013 report describing the role of product stewardship within a company, The Conference Board, a non-profit business research organisation, highlighted product stewardship as a “business critical driver with potential to impact the very core of an organisation.” The product stewardship profession is growing and evolving to meet this demand.
A product steward often serves as the central hub between the environmental health and safety (EHS) team – comprising toxicologists, risk assessors and hazard communication specialists – and the product commercialisation team – comprising marketing, product development and compliance specialists. This person needs to have broad knowledge, with a good foundation of technical skills related to evaluating environmental and human health risks in an increasing complex regulatory environment. Their technical skills must be balanced with business savvy in areas of supply chain management and business risk prioritisation. A successful product steward must excel at understanding and communicating relevant issues to suppliers, internal stakeholders, and customers throughout a product’s lifecycle and along the value chain.

**Professional and academic homes**

The PSS was formed in 2013 to provide an organising body and global voice, as well as opportunities for networking, education and professional development, through annual meetings, a weekly online newsletter and access to workshops and trainings. It has quickly grown to 2,500 members and hosted two successful conferences. We are already looking forward to this year’s annual conference, which will be held again in Baltimore on May 23-25.

One of the main objectives is to define and advance the profession. With this in mind, the PSS has published Core Competencies for Product Stewardship, which describes the technical, regulatory and professional competencies required to excel as a product steward. The PSS is also in the process of publishing several texts about the profession including:

- professional practices of product stewardship;
- product stewardship value proposition; and
- principles of risk assessment for product stewards.

In parallel, an academic home has been established at Indiana University in Indianapolis to support education and training of current professionals and future product stewards. The faculty has highly experienced senior level product stewardship professionals from the chemicals and consumer products industries.

Product stewardship is a growing profession and is designed for people who want to do meaningful work at some of the best companies in the world. We are excited to see the building of a global professional community and the academic infrastructure to drive the community forward.

**About the Authors**

Dr Steven Lacey is an associate professor and chair of the Department of Environmental Health Science at the IU Richard M Fairbanks School of Public Health in Indianapolis. He is the director of the Product Stewardship Certificate programme.

Kali Frost is a research associate and adjunct faculty in the Department of Environmental Health Science at the IU Richard M Fairbanks School of Public Health in Indianapolis and helps administer the Product Stewardship programme.

**Links**

- Become a PSS member: [www.productstewards.org/Membership/Pages/JoinPSS.aspx](http://www.productstewards.org/Membership/Pages/JoinPSS.aspx)
- Product stewardship guidelines: [www.icca-chem.org/ICCADocs/ProductStewardshipGuidelines-Final.doc](http://www.icca-chem.org/ICCADocs/ProductStewardshipGuidelines-Final.doc)
- Millennial Impact research page: [www.themillennialimpact.com/research/](http://www.themillennialimpact.com/research/)
- Forbes article about Deloitte research: [www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2012/07/03/what-millennials-want-most-a-career-that-actually-matters](http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2012/07/03/what-millennials-want-most-a-career-that-actually-matters)
- 2013 Conference Board report ([search for product stewardship](http://www.conference-board.org/publications/publicationlistall.cfm))
Workers in Asia face a myriad of health issues relating to traditional and high tech industries. ANOH’s inaugural meeting will start to address the challenges, discovers Mamta Patel.

In June, the first conference of the Asian Network of Occupational Hygiene (ANOH) will take place in Vietnam. The meeting, which will attract more than 100 delegates, marks a milestone in a journey that began six years ago to recognise the unique needs of Asian companies in implementing occupational hygiene measures effectively.

Dooyong Park, professor of industrial hygiene at Hansung University in Seoul, South Korea, says the idea for an Asian network came from IOHA’s 2010 meeting in Rome. There then followed a number of preparatory meetings leading to the official launch of ANOH in Kuala Lumpur in November 2014. Members of the network comprise individual practitioners, researchers, officers and academic experts.

Professor Park, who is IOHA president-elect, describes the development of occupational hygiene in Asia as still in its infancy. “The infrastructure for occupational safety and health are not prepared yet,” he says, “in other words, we are suffering from a lack of resources, especially experts.”

This has long been a concern. The rapid industrialisation of Asian economies – without the necessary measures in place to protect workers – has had disturbing health and environmental impacts. Many of these go unreported, despite a few major incidents capturing global headlines.

“Occupational hygiene was developed and led by western countries and we have just adopted it,” Professor Park says. “However, we have found that something is not working well in terms of professional management and intervention. I believe it is because the measures we were adopting lacked an Asian perspective.

“ANOH would like to explore this Asian perspective. If we can succeed in developing this, it will eventually be of great to help to all, including western society.”

There is a lot at stake and the challenges are great. Managing occupational hygiene in Asian economies requires tackling the whole range of issues from old-fashioned, well defined health hazards in traditional industries, to emerging, complex and still poorly-understood ones in the hi-tech sector.

He observes that occupational hygiene is sometimes described as “part science and part art”. The science is transferable between societies, but then, to implement measures, it requires the art of understanding cultural and social context. Resolving this will require practitioners to consider the circumstances unique to each Asian country. These include high population, lower economic status, labour-intensive work, dynamic and rapid change, a health divide between rich and poor, diversity, a relationship-based society and highly context-dependent language.

This, he says, “is a big challenge. So, it is a long-term mission for us. In the short term, our missions are to build capacity, harmonise and collaborate.”


For more information, visit www.anoh.net
Challenging traditional industrial hygiene approaches

Different work practices in the developing world are being tackled by Workplace Health Without Borders. Emma Chynoweth finds out how the group is seeking to redress the imbalance with developed countries

The story of workplace safety is a tale of two worlds. On the one hand, in most developed countries occupational hygiene (or industrial hygiene as it is known in the US) is a well-recognised practice. Most companies adhere to the basic principle of employer responsibility when it comes to protecting their workers.

Switch now to developing nations. Not only is there a lack of trained occupational hygienists – the whole framework of employment is different. And different in a way that makes many of the conventional approaches to worker safety irrelevant.

Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB), a not-for-profit organisation, was formed in 2011 to address the gap.

Noel Tresider, Fellow of the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH) says in 2015 there were just over 7,600 certified occupational hygienists recognised by the 16 certification bodies that belong to IOHA’s National Accredited Recognition (NAR) programme. Most work in the developed world.

If the whole world is to be served by an equivalent number of occupational hygienists, another 45,000 practitioners would be required, he says.

WHWB’s president Marianne Levitsky says: “Our 500-plus volunteer members are really concerned about parts of the world where there is a lack of expertise and resources for workplace health – and we have a particular focus on developing countries.” She adds that the numbers of people dying and suffering from occupational illnesses is “astounding”. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that around 2.34 million people die each year from causes related to their workplace – 85% of these from occupational diseases, many of which stem from exposure to chemicals. She notes how the figure far outstrips those perishing from the Aids virus (1.5 million), road accidents (1.24 million), and conflict (0.74 million).

Different working practices

As well as having a lack of workplace health professionals, Ms Levitsky says that different working practices in many emerging economies result in completely different exposure issues. Much of the problem stems from the so-called informal economy. The ILO says this is a growing concern. In some developing countries it contributes as much as 60% to GDP.

In the informal economy, many people work in their homes, for example recycling e-waste or cutting and polishing gemstones such as agate. In these cases, Ms Levitsky says, whole families are being exposed, and all the time, as they live where they work.

Exposure of children – who accompany their parents to work, or who are themselves labourers – is another major concern. The ILO estimates that around half of the 168 million children that work, are exposed to hazards.
Occupational exposure limits are calculated for adults working 8 hours/day, 5 days/week. However, when work is done at home, people, including children, are exposed 24/7, Ms Levitsky says.

To recognise these factors, WHWB has recently changed its vision and mission statements.

Its original vision statement – “A world where workers do not get ill because of their work” has been expanded to include “families and communities”.

**Occupational exposure limits are calculated for adults working 8 hours/day, 5 days/week. However, when work is done at home people, including children, are exposed 24/7**

The mission statement broadens the group’s scope from a focus on occupational health and hygiene professionals, to call for the prevention of work-related disease around the world through “shared expertise, knowledge and skills”. In addition to occupational hygienists, WHWB members include physicians, nurses and other experts.

The group is also ramping up its activities, which includes training, mentoring, development of a toolkit, and fund-raising. It has just opened a branch in the UK.

Most of its work revolves around hazardous substances – and in particular exposure to silica from mining, gem and stone cutting, brick-making, and construction. Issues rising up the agenda are:

- artisanal mining, which deals with exposures to multiple substances including silica, mercury and lead;
- uncontrolled recycling of e-waste, often using open fires or mercury baths to extract hazardous precious metals, which again gives rise to multiple exposures; and
- ‘street welding’.

The group has worked in several countries – including Nepal, Pakistan and Tanzania – to try to tackle silica exposure from low-tech brick kilns. As well as identifying where the most hazardous exposures occur in the production, data on exposures is being gathered.

While research has focused on how exposures occur, more needs to be done in terms of what should be done to control exposures.

### Helping ‘informal’ workforces

The growing number of ‘informal’ workforces is a key issue. This includes the use of traders who act as the link between the manufacture of many products and their introduction into global supply chains. Ms Levitsky says that the lines of employer responsibility have become blurred.

She adds that there are positive factors. These include fair trade initiatives and companies that take responsibility for their supply chains to ensure that manufacture of their products is not outsourced to companies with poor health and safety practices. She also says that governments need to take more responsibility – citing the failure of countries to act on exports of asbestos or lead in paint. Legal frameworks and enforcement need to be improved.

And workers themselves need to participate in solutions, she says.

Ms Levitsky adds that remedies, such as local exhaust measures, are often not affordable or applicable. For example, reliable power is not available to run exhaust equipment, or it is too hot to wear respiratory protection masks.

### Governments need to take more responsibility. Legal frameworks and enforcement need to be improved

Where feasible, WHWB encourages operators to use suitable approaches – for example, wet methods to control silica dust.

WHWB is also developing a toolkit of resources to support intervention measures. It has identified a number of research and development needs, such as suitable respiratory protection equipment.

To learn more please visit [www.whwb.org](http://www.whwb.org) or email info@whwb.org
Chemical Risk Manager
The hub for product safety resources

Round-up from:

Chemical Risk Manager

Resources Special Report May 2016 - First Aid Measures for Safety Data Sheets

Written by toxicologist and expert in hazard and risk communication for workplaces Laura Robinson, this guide to writing first aid measures to be included in safety data sheets is intended to provide practitioners with expertise and practical suggestions to help them in their work.

Read document in full: https://chemicalwatch.com/crmhub/47592

Early warning systems needed to cut work-related illness, says Dutch study

Europe-wide discussions are needed on how to monitor and evaluate new and emerging chemical risks to workers, the Netherlands National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) has concluded, following a pan-European study.

The study had a particular focus on identifying substances leading to work-related cancer. All European countries were sent a questionnaire about:

- national systems to monitor clinical symptoms;
- databases, which might be used for epidemiological studies on work-related illnesses; and
- biomarkers that are used for identifying health effects.

Twenty three countries participated but only seven countries reported having clinical watch systems that were specifically designed to detect new and emerging chemical risks. Another ten did have systems that could be used for that purpose.

The study concluded that cases should be collected and evaluated at an international level, perhaps by using an existing network of professionals who evaluate and discuss new and emerging risks for workers, such as Modernet – the Monitoring trends in occupational diseases and tracing new and emerging risks network.

The initiative follows the Dutch presidency of the EU in the first half of 2016 and its declared aim to reduce work-related cancers.

Further Information


17 May

EU inhalation exposure measurement standard finalised

The European Committee for Standardization (CEN) has finalised the draft of its preliminary European standard 689, which deals with inhalation exposure measurement. The CEN enquiry phase is scheduled for three months from 2 June.

During that time, national bodies will organise consultations on the draft, which will supersede EN 689:1995.

It outlines a compliance strategy for employers, faced with occupational exposure limit (OEL) values for inhalation of
chemical substances. The problem many face is one of variability. Any measurement taken shows only what is happening at that specific point in time. To get the big picture, you have to extrapolate.

The standard helps by proposing a probability of compliance to be achieved. It also provides an example of the number of measurements that might be taken, and how the resulting data might be interpreted, to accomplish this. Crucially, it describes under what circumstances an organisation could reasonably conclude they are in compliance.

Members of the CEN workgroup, tasked with developing the standard, ran a workshop on the draft at the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) meeting in Glasgow in April.

Q&A

The standard also describes how frequently the exposure should be reassessed in the event that the employer concludes they are compliant. During the question and answer session, one attendee raised concern about the duration of the reassessment period, which might be as long as four years. The task associated with the exposure might have changed significantly in that time, he said.

Another attendee suggested that task-based assessment, as opposed to shift-based assessment, might help to mitigate some of the issues associated with variability in measurements relating to the assessment date or the particular employee undertaking the task.

The workgroup will review the comments received and decide upon any required changes at a meeting to be held on 19-20 September. The standard will then need to be ratified by the member organisations of the CEN.

Chair of the workgroup, Raymond Vincent from the French National Institute for Research and Security (INRS), said that he expected ratification before the end of the year.

Further Information

Work programme: https://standards.cen.eu/dyn/www/f?p=204:11000::FSP_PROJECT,FSP_LANG_ID:39729,25&cs=1E5F77C8B21FB21186B8BAEAEDE101995A

**13 May**

**OELs for 13 carcinogens under EU Commission proposal**

The European Commission has proposed occupational exposure limits (OELs) for 13 carcinogenic substances, including respirable crystalline silica.

The substances are among 20 priority chemical agents for which the Commission is conducting scientific and economic assessments with a view to preparing harmonised OELs across the EU. A second proposal covering the remaining substances will be issued by the end of the year, once further preparatory work is completed.

Marianne Thyssen – Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility – said the proposal would save 100,000 lives in the next 50 years.

Cancer is responsible for half of all work-related deaths in the EU, but currently only three substances are subject to binding OELs under the carcinogens and mutagens Directive: benzene, hardwood dust and vinyl chloride monomer.

The proposal suggests lowering the OELs for hardwood dust and vinyl chloride monomer, creating the following OELs:

- 1,2-epoxypropane; 2.4mg/m³;
- 1,3-butadiene; 2.2mg/m³;
- 2-nitropropane; 18mg/m³;
- acrylamide; 0.1mg/m³;
- bromoethylene; 4.4mg/m³;
- chromium (VI) compounds; 0.025mg/m³;
- ethylene oxide; 1.8mg/m³;
- hardwood dusts; 3mg/m³ (from 7.77mg/m³);
- hydrazine; 0.013mg/m³;
- o-toluidine; 0.5mg/m³;
- respirable crystalline silica (RCS); 0.1mg/m³;
- refractory ceramic fibres (RCF); 0.3 f/ml; and
- vinyl chloride monomer (VCM); 2.6 mg/m³ (from 5mg/m³).

The number of exposed workers is particularly high for RCS (5.3 million), hydrazine (2.1 million) and chromium (VI) compounds (92,000).

Furthermore, where national OELs apply, comparison with the proposed EU OELs can be stark. In Cyprus and Slovenia, for example, the national OEL for chromium (VI) compounds is 2 mg/m³ – 80 times the proposed EU OEL. Currently 16 EU states have OELs higher than that proposed by the Commission.

RCS is included as a ‘process generated’ substance. Silicosis and lung cancer caused by occupational exposure to RCS is a particular concern in the construction industry, which accounts for 70% of all exposed workers.
The proposed limit for RCS of 0.1mg/m³ is the same as the limit currently in force in the US. However, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has proposed lowering this to 0.05mg/m³ – sparking legal challenges from trade groups and worker unions.

Most EU member states already apply at least the proposed limit, with the exception of Cyprus, Greece and Poland.

Further Information


25 May
US EPA dashboard launched with data on 720,000 chemicals

The US EPA has launched a freely available chemistry dashboard, containing predicted and experimental data for 720,000 chemicals.

The interactive Chemical Safety for Sustainability (iCSS) Chemistry dashboard contains chemical structures, experimental and predicted physical-chemical and toxicity data, as well as associated patents and articles.

The data are pulled from a variety of sources, including the EPA’s computational toxicology research databases and those that are public domain, such as the National Center for Biotechnology Information’s PubChem database.

The dashboard can be searched using chemical name, mass, formula or chemical identifier.

“We do not have experimental data for all of [the 720,000 chemicals currently listed],” explains Tony Williams, project leader. “A small subset of fewer than 50,000 chemicals have associated experimental data but most have predicted properties.”

He adds: “Where possible we list experimental data sourced from multiple sources. We also have up to 12 properties - for now, with more to come - predicted for each chemical where the models include those chemicals in the applicability domain.”

The database complements the EPA’s iCSS ToxCast dashboard, which contains high-throughput screening data on about 8,000 chemicals.

It includes quality assurance flags to indicate the degree of curation and confidence associated with the data, explains EPA communications director, Monica Linnenbrink.

The EPA is keen for users to provide data suggestions or highlight any “data anomalies”.

Further Information
Chemistry dashboard: https://comptox.epa.gov/dashboard

1 March
Australian institute updates asbestos exposure guide

The Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH) has updated a position paper to give guidance on the assessment of occupational exposure to asbestos fibre.

Prepared by the institute’s Exposure Standards Committee, the updated guidance only covers technical aspects and issues associated with exposure to asbestos during work activities. It does not deal with those relating to household and community exposure.

The document notes that even though asbestos is banned in Australia, and other countries, there is still a large industry involved in its assessment and removal. In addition, there is a considerable number of workplaces that face occupational exposures in areas such as maintenance work associated with in-situ asbestos products, waste management, non-asbestos mining, road building and other earth-moving activities due to the presence of contaminant asbestiform minerals and naturally-occurring asbestos.

Key messages highlighted in the paper are:

- asbestos is a risk to health when the fibres are breathed in, with the potential to cause cancer;
- when asbestos-containing material is left in situ, undisturbed and in good condition, it poses no measurable risk to health;
- risk assessments for naturally-occurring asbestos and asbestos-containing material must be conducted by a competent person;
- the AIOH believes that exposure can be adequately controlled through best practices, including proper planning, asbestos registers – which detail the location and condition of asbestos-containing material – and labelling, and following strict guidelines set by workplace health and safety jurisdictions.

Overall, the AIOH believes that current asbestos exposure standards used in Australia are adequate, and as with any carcinogen, exposures should be maintained as low as reasonably practicable.

Further Information
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