

The logo for the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) features the letters 'BOHS' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'O' is stylized with a white circle inside it.

British Occupational
Hygiene Society



IOHA



OCCUPATIONAL
HYGIENE SOCIETY
OF IRELAND

13th IOHA International Scientific Conference

Dublin, Ireland
June 2024

The Occupational Hygiene Society of Ireland (OHSI) and the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) are privileged to jointly host this conference and to contribute to its successful outcome.

The conference theme has been confirmed as - 'Protecting workers from health hazards: Advancing in this changing world'.

The conference aims to promote occupational hygiene and worker health protection by the minimisation of worker exposure to hazardous agents globally through plenary sessions, keynote lectures, parallel talks, workshops, poster presentations and

professional development as well as networking opportunities and social functions.

A strong Global media campaign will publicise the main causes of occupational disease throughout the conference.

More information including venue, dates and abstract submission arrangements will be announced very soon. Please mark your diaries for June 2024 in Dublin, Ireland!

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Updates of IOHA associations and activities with the International Labour Organization

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Over the past few years, the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) Stakeholders Relations Committee and members of the Executive Committee have worked hard to build bridges with the International Labour Organization (ILO). In 2016, Nancy Leppink (Chief of Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADminOSH)) attended the IOHA Board meeting; in 2018 she was the keynote speaker at the IOHA Triennial Conference in Washington, D.C., United States. IOHA members have recently worked on think pieces to support the ILO 100/World Health Day (Manal Azzi, Norhazlina Mydin, Chris Laszcs-Davis), written and reviewed guidance documents on biological and chemical agents (Frank Muchiri, Christian Schumacher, Remko Houba, Andrea Hiddinga, Thomas Fuller), and assisted the ILO on specific regional research projects, such as the cotton/textile industry hazard assessment in Madagascar (Andres Winkes, Andrea Hiddinga).

Since 2020, Thomas Fuller has represented IOHA on the ILO Global Coalition for Safety and Health at Work Task Group on Vision Zero at the Enterprise Level, and the Task Group for Promoting Decent Work and Productive Employment through Higher Education. This project brings together educators from around the world to work on a variety of research projects, looking at the role that education can play in improving worker health and safety, globally.

In May of this year, Rene Leblanc and Thomas Fuller each co-chaired different sessions of the ILO Vision Zero Summit held virtually and hosted by Japan. Rene co-chaired a session and spoke at a session on Health/Hygiene/COVID-19, and Thomas co-chaired and presented a paper at a session on Education/E-learning/Credentialing. As a result of our participation at the event, IOHA was one of only five international organisations invited to sign the Tokyo Declaration on Vision Zero for All, Japan 2022.

More recently, on 8 June 2022, IOHA President, Norhazlina Mydin, addressed the plenary session of the 110th International Labour Conference, (ILC) of the ILO. This is a fantastic honour and represents the culmination of many years of hard work by our members in putting the good face and name of IOHA forward on so many ILO collaborations and projects. The following is the statement made by Lina, virtually, to the Conference:

Dear President, distinguished delegates, guests, observers, ladies and gentlemen. Firstly, thank you for giving the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) the opportunity to speak at this Plenary of the 110th ILC. IOHA, representing 18 000 members and 8 200 professional occupational hygienists from 35 countries, is truly excited to be part of the journey for the amendment of the 1998 Declaration: Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Recognition of health and safety as a fundamental human right is



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only the beginning of an exciting journey ahead of us. IOHA believes this will drive three focused areas, namely:

- 1. Strengthened regulatory framework*
- 2. Enhanced capability building*
- 3. Greater partnership nurtured*

Strengthened regulatory framework

Director General Guy Rhyder, in his speech (https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_846791/lang--en/index.htm), mentioned that three million lives are lost each year because of work-related accidents and diseases. He stressed the 'stark and clear' responsibility of the ILO to protect workers against sickness, disease and injury arising from employment. This demonstrates the urgent need to review and strengthen the legal instrument to provide minimum requirements to protect workers in their working environment. At the time that businesses are recovering from the impact of COVID-19, economic viability will be a bigger priority for some, over the investments that protect workers' safety, health and wellbeing. Stronger regulations and enforcement, as a result of the adaptation of health and safety as a fundamental right, will drive the compliance culture.

Enhanced capability building

IOHA recognise the concerted effort to enhance capability building, especially in the areas of occupational hygiene, for various stakeholders. It is not only for the regulatory bodies, but also for professional safety and health organisations, researchers, social security institutions, workers, and students, who are desperately needed to support the larger companies and SMEs for implementation of measures to assure safe and healthy working conditions.

Access to trainings is now easier than before with e-learning modules, and some are even offered pro bono. Aligned with technological enhancement, research to further improve workers' health and safety should also focus on developing economies, where a lot more industrialisation is taking place. The aspect of local culture should be taken into consideration to ensure an effective strategy and holistic mindset for prevention, which is built on the common desire to promote and establish a global prevention culture.

Greater partnership nurtured

In IOHA, our mission is to enhance the international network of occupational hygiene organisations that promote, develop, and improve occupational hygiene worldwide, providing a safe and healthy working environment for all. With the recognition of health and safety as a fundamental human right, we are even clearer about our contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The

Tokyo Declaration on Vision Zero for All 2022 is another testament for greater partnership across the globe.

In conclusion, access to safe and healthy working environments is not optional, it is the fundamental right of the 3.3 billion workforces, globally. It is the right thing to do.

Thank you very much.

Norhazlina Mydin, CIH, CPIH, CSFC

President, IOHA

Workplace Health Without Borders and Wolaita Sodo University flexibility and international capacity building project

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A chance meeting, at the 2017 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) USE Conference in Denver, USA, between Workplace Health Without Borders-US (WHWB-US) former President, Dr Albert Tien, and the former Vice-President of Wolaita Sodo University (WSU) in Ethiopia, Dr Yesuneh Chernet, DVM, has led to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between WHWB-US and the University. The goal of the MoU is to establish capacity-building joint research programmes and professional exchanges in occupational health and safety (OHS). WHWB-US has embarked on a five-year project to assist WSU. The University was established in 2007 and is a non-profit public higher education institution. WSU has branch campuses in Bodity, Areka, Humbo, Otona, and Tercha. It is officially accredited by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and has an enrollment of approximately 35 000 students.

Several meetings have been held with WSU leadership to formulate short- and long-term goals and areas of co-operation. The project leader, Dr Albert Tien, developed a strategic five-year plan for the University, which includes capacity-building programmes in the areas of work-related health and safety issues; organising symposia, conferences and meetings on research issues related to work-related health and safety issues, promoting interest in reducing occupationally related injuries and diseases among underserved workers, their families, and their communities at large; and seeking possibilities for joint research projects. The project has been awarded a grant by the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) International Affairs Committee, Emerging Economy Microgrant Program. Project participants are grateful for this support and are looking for additional funding.

The Pandemic's travel and visa restrictions threw a wrench into plans to bring the WSU leadership delegation for in-person meetings and training at Ann Arbor, Michigan. To maintain the momentum, a



series of online virtual presentations and trainings were developed by the WHWB-US team and partner organisations such as AIHA, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MiOSHA), the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA), and the University of Michigan. Virtual symposia began on 25 March 2022 and continued through to 17 June 2022. WHWB is planning to host the WSU leadership delegation in Ann Arbor next year, and therefore WHWB-US is seeking further funding to cover the costs of hosting the delegation.

WHWB-US is a 501(c)(3) public charity whose mission is to ensure that workers and employers have the knowledge and means to prevent work-related illness and injury. The organisation is composed of occupational health professionals, and other concerned individuals, whose mandate is to share technical skills and training. This mandate includes providing the financial means to help underserved worker populations, throughout the world, to identify and manage OHS risks. The goal is to develop the knowledge and creative capacity in these worker populations to assess and mitigate the risks of occupational hazards in their workplaces, as well as where those hazards may impact their communities at large. To contact WHWB, please mail WHWB-US at 1100 N Main Street Suite 001, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, USA, or e-mail whwb-us@whwb-us.org.

History and status of the Argentinian Occupational Health and Safety Administration

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Argentina was a pioneer among United Nations (UN) member countries when they sanctioned their first Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Standards law 19587 in 1972. Fifty years of existence of the law was marked on 21 April 2022. During this time, the field of OHS in Argentina has grown significantly, aided by a variety of educational programmes offered by colleges and universities. Graduates of these programmes work to support the health and safety of workers in a variety of organisations and industries.

In 1995, Occupational Risks Law 24557 was created to provide additional worker protection. It was called 'Insurers of Risk at Work' (ART, *Aseguradora de Riesgo del Trabajo*), known in other countries as '*Mutuas*'. The principal aims of the Insurers are to work together with companies in matters of safety prevention, providing them with technical assistance, and to assist with damages related to work activity (covering accidents at work sites, *in itinere*, and occupational diseases).

Simultaneously, the OHS Public Administration is managed by the Superintendence of Occupational Risks (SRT), who issues and updates the regulations on this field. The SRT also audits the insurance companies (ARTs) and employers through the Local Labour Administrations, covering OHS issues throughout the country. All the above-mentioned programmes and organisations make up the Argentine Occupational Risks System. Prior to this, the only compensation for injured workers in Argentina was for funeral expenses.

After the publication of the Occupational Risk Law, various regulations were issued in pursuit of risk prevention. Argentina has three highlighted regulatory items:

- Decree 351/79: industrial workplaces
- Decree 911/96: construction workplaces
- Decree 617/97: agriculture and cattle-raising workplaces

In order to comply with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 139/77, in 2000 Argentina created its Record of Companies that use Carcinogenic Substances. Although it has been updated over the years, an important modification was sanctioned in 2019, which led to an improvement in the data quality, forcing employers to keep medical records for a period of 40 years. Consequently, this has enabled better control and follow up of occupational disease cases.

Another milestone in Argentinian OHS Law was Resolution 295/2003, which conducted a technical update for exposure limits, following the main international guides and best practices for OHS hazards. Above all, it added ergonomic risk to the system, whose pathologies occupy, in Argentina's OHS Administration, a place in the top three most-commonly occurring occupational diseases. This amendment was updated by Resolution 886/2015, which forces all companies to have an ergonomic assessment of workplaces, validated by an interdisciplinary team.

Currently, the Argentine Occupational Risks System, after more than 25 years of experience, provides coverage to more than 9 930 000 workers and 1 020 000 employers. In conclusion, it has managed to reduce fatalities at work by 80%, which can be translated into 14 000 lives that have been saved.¹

REFERENCE

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The role of industrial hygiene in 4.0 industries

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The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) defines industrial hygiene as the science and art of anticipating, recognising, evaluating, controlling and confirming existing health hazards in work environments. Although the prevention of occupational disease continues to be the main driver in this field, the disruptive changes that today's society is experiencing present new challenges and opportunities that must be taken into consideration. In this sense, both the digital transformation and the evolution of the concept of corporate sustainability play a fundamental role. In the first instance, it should be kept in mind that exposure assessment is a core part of industrial hygiene.

This exposure assessment is carried out through the articulation of different elements that are combined in a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle of continuous improvement (from diagnosis to control). In turn, digital transformation has taken a predominant role in terms of how companies apply digital capabilities to their processes and services to improve efficiency, manage risk, and leverage new revenue-generating opportunities. In this sense, the assessment of exposure can take advantage of the interconnection of measurement equipment under real-time web platforms to enhance hygiene risk management. Monitoring networks are installed at different points in the company, generating 24/7 coverage of different physical agents. In addition, these systems can be used to identify the need for additional studies in the most critical areas or in those areas with the greatest variations in exposure.

Nevertheless, the volume, interdependence and analysis of this information demands an adequate technological infrastructure and presents additional challenges that must be resolved under a global company scheme. As a second aspect, the concept of business sustainability has evolved in recent decades towards a holistic vision that

articulates three elements, viz. environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Based on that, areas of a company must be aligned to the strategic planning and generate real value in favour of a holistic sustainability. Industrial hygiene, as a transversal science that interacts with different dependencies of the company (production, maintenance, supply, medicine, legal department, and environmental, among others), has the challenge, and responsibility, of improving its integration to enhance the generation of corporate value.

It is important to emphasise that the required interaction between areas of a company presents a highly complex challenge for managers. The analysis of results by those who make decisions in a company requires knowledge of these interactions to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Therefore, hygiene management should be oriented not only towards the prevention of occupational illnesses, but also towards the construction of traceable information that can be used strategically by other company departments. Based on a corporate business intelligence model, industrial hygiene activities can provide another useful dataset in support of the entire information structure. Data quality concepts related to integrity, homogeneity, and granularity are relevant in this regard and must be considered throughout the hygiene process. Finally, the implementation of artificial intelligence algorithms, applied to data analytics, is a field of wide development and adoption. In hygiene, the use and analysis of information to profile similarities (e.g. similar exposure groups (SEGs)) or predict future scenarios (exposure variation over time) are being adopted as management support.
