

The logo for the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), featuring the letters 'BOHS' in a stylized blue font.

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!

Edited by Dr Thomas P Fuller

e-mail: tpfuller1@gmail.com

XXII Symposium of Polish Association of Industrial Hygienists – Current Issues in Industrial Hygiene

Agnieszka Klimecka, Joanna Jurewicz

e-mail: pthp@imp.lodz.pl

Each year, the Polish Association of Industrial Hygienists (PTHP) organises a scientific and training symposium. From 14 to 16 September 2022 a symposium, with the theme *Current Issues in Industrial Hygiene*, took place in Lodz, Poland. The conference topics focused on the understanding and prevention of negative health effects caused by exposure to harmful factors in the work environment. Conference attendees included industrial hygienists, employees of universities and research institutes, control authorities, occupational medicine service providers, laboratory professionals, and occupational health and safety specialists. Participants had the opportunity to take part in nine thematic sessions:

1. Amendment of EU rules and policies on substances that are toxic to reproductive processes, carcinogenic, or mutagenic
2. Exposure to ionising radiation
3. Selected chemical, dust, physical and biological hazards in the work environment
4. Chemical safety
5. New forms of learning and working as a challenge for students, employees, and employers
6. Methodologies for the assessment of work environments
7. Occupational hygiene and medicine for employees



8. Improving the effectiveness of personal respiratory protection in the light of new products and IT tools

9. Exposure to electromagnetic radiation from industrial equipment
Leading lectures were delivered by specialists in occupational hygiene and medicine.

There was also a poster discussion session that mainly focused on the development of new methods for evaluating various chemical compounds in the working environment.

Approximately 100 professionals participated in the conference. They had the opportunity to expand their knowledge and exchange experiences in the field of occupational hygiene. As the information presented during the symposium was positively accepted, the PTHP management is already planning the next symposium in 2023. 🌐

Growing the occupational hygiene workforce in New Zealand

Kerry Cheung

e-mail: kerry.cheung@worksafe.govt.nz

In New Zealand, deaths related to occupational health are estimated at 750–900 a year. In addition, there are an estimated 5 000–6 000 hospitalisations each year. To put this into perspective, a worker is 15 times more likely to die from a work-related disease than from a workplace accident.¹ To address this, WorkSafe New Zealand (the Government health and safety regulator) released a strategic plan for work-related health where, ultimately, fewer people should experience work-related ill-health.² Part of the strategic plan is to support building the capacity and capabilities of professional health and safety workforce groups, with occupational hygienists being the priority. This was the beginning of the Occupational Hygienist Workforce Development Project, which started in 2018.

This programme of work is jointly managed by New Zealand Occupational Health and Safety (NZOHS) and the Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ), the umbrella organisation representing workplace health and safety professions, which aims to raise professional standards and connect businesses with trusted health and safety professionals.



There are two phases to the project. The first phase spanned the period 2018 to 2021. The second phase commenced in 2021 and will continue until 2024. The objectives of the project are:

- to grow the critical mass of health and safety professionals to ensure that more occupational hygienists are available to support New Zealand industries
- to enhance education pathways, thereby improving capabilities and ensuring that accurate, high-quality advice is given to employers
- to create opportunities for established occupational hygienists to continue their professional development, networks, and career aspirations.

In 2018, at the beginning of Phase 1, NZOHS had 85 members. By 2021, three years later, this number had increased by 48% to 126 (Figure 1). Buoyed by the success of Phase 1, an additional three years of funding was provided to continue the project by WorkSafe, New Zealand's primary workplace health and safety regulator. One year into Phase 2, there was already a 25% increase in membership, from 126 to 157 (Figure 1).

The activities in the project are broadly categorised as follows:

Grow the number of qualified and experienced occupational hygienists in New Zealand

- *Scholarships* – award and administer scholarships for candidates to obtain Master's degrees in occupational hygiene from an institution recognised by the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), or the International Certificate in Occupational Hygiene. Since 2018, 23 scholarships have been awarded.
- *Internship programme* – a summer pilot project recruited two business hosts and two interns; both interns secured full-time work with their hosts. The internship programme continues.
- *Mentoring* – there are currently nine mentor/mentee relationships underway; the aim is to increasing this to 20 per year.

Increase technical and specialist occupational hygiene capability


- *Specific technical training* – NZOHS delivered Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) modules to 199 students, from 2019 to 2022.
- *Training/trainer competency framework* – 15 NZOHS full and fellow members attended a 'Train the Trainer' course to improve the quality of trainers and training experience for the delivery of the OHTA modules.
- *Specialist training* – with limited access to specialised courses in New Zealand, NZOHS arranged courses for members in local exhaust ventilation (LEV), mining industry, and ethics. NZOHS also developed and runs the Commit2Fit (C2F) courses for training competent respirator-fit testers.
- *New Zealand occupational hygiene qualification* – NZOHS and HASANZ have been meeting with universities in New Zealand and Australia to discuss the establishment of a Master's level occupational hygiene course in New Zealand, which is currently underway.

Increase wider occupational hygiene knowledge and attract others into the profession

- *Co-profession core understanding* – each year, NZOHS delivers two Basic Principles in Occupational Hygiene (W201) courses, directed at other health and safety professionals to increase their understanding of occupational hygiene.
- *Attraction* – to explain the role and value of occupational hygienists to other disciplines, NZOHS and HASANZ developed a career pathway document and conference collateral; increased NZOHS web presence through a rebranded website, social media, external presentations, and electronic newsletters; added occupational hygiene to the Government priority careers list; and listed occupational hygiene as a scarce skill shortage for New Zealand work visas, meaning it is now easier to get a work visa if you have those skills.
- *Improving the profile of occupational hygiene* – NZOHS delivered presentations to other health and safety professional bodies, and is actively engaging with other HASANZ member associations. NZOHS is holding its annual conference in May 2023.
- *Strategic planning, systems, and procedures* – there are ongoing improvements to our systems and processes, with a view to aligning them to ISO 17024:2012 and, possibly, a future IOHA National Accreditation Recognition certification scheme.

There has been a tremendous effort in the last five years to grow the occupational hygiene workforce in New Zealand. With significant gains made already and further support for growth, the future of the occupational hygiene profession in New Zealand is looking good.

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2. WorkSafe New Zealand (2016, August). Healthy Work. WorkSafe's strategic plan for work-related health 2016–2026; August 2016. Available from: <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1448-worksafes-strategic-plan-for-work-related-health-2016-2026> (accessed 7 May 2023). 

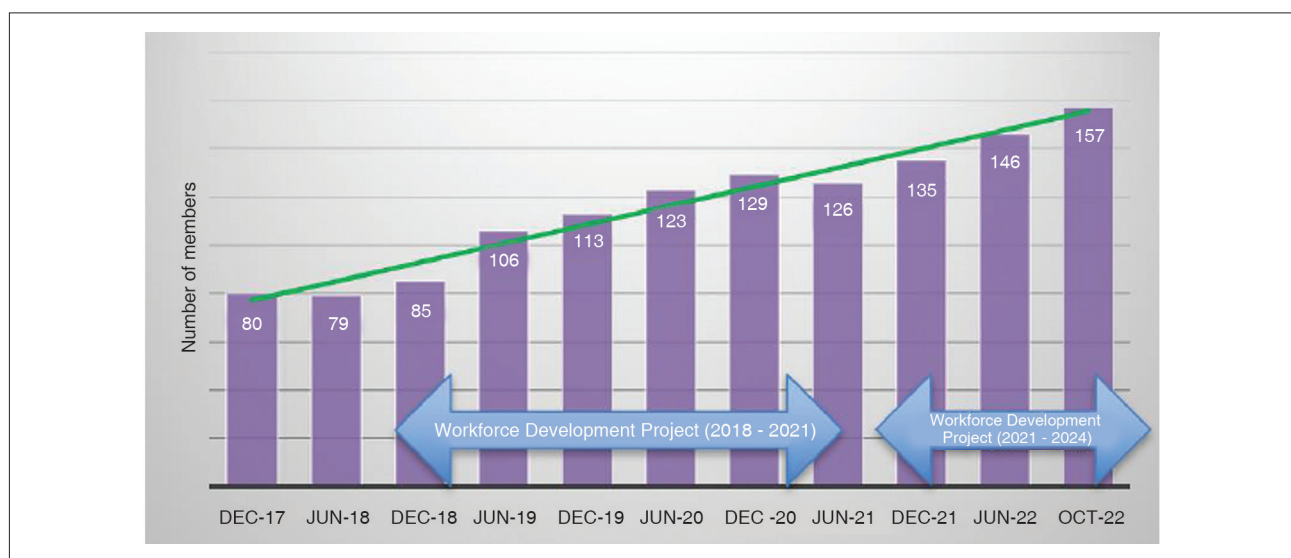


Figure 1. NZOHS membership, December 2017–October 2022

SOFHYT cooperates with other international organisations to increase occupational hygiene awareness

Alessandro Sassi

e-mail: alessandro.sassi@dsm.com

Nathalie Argentin

e-mail: presidence@sofhyt.fr

The French Society of Occupational Hygienists (SOFHYT) has been collaborating with Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) to organise health and safety training for French-speaking students in low- and medium-income countries. WHWB's goal is to provide workers with occupational health technical assistance, training, and skills development to help them increase capacity in occupational hygiene and local infrastructure, to manage and improve health conditions in their workplaces.

In 2020, WHWB approached national industrial hygiene associations to extend their offer of training programmes to non-English-speaking countries. The SOFHYT was quick to embrace the initiative.

The SOFHYT members have translated into French the Occupational Health and Safety Awareness Course, originally developed by the Occupational Hygiene Association (OHTA). Tutorials were recorded and study material was prepared in French. During the last few years, the material was improved and updated, and the training now includes pre-recorded e-learning modules on Google Classroom™, as well as sessions with instructors. The training is conducted entirely online and in French. At the end of the seven-week course, participants are able to recognise common workplace hazards, implement the hierarchy of controls, and recognise when to seek additional technical assistance.

Three training cycles have already been completed. Approximately 50 students have completed the programme to date. Attendees have come mainly from Senegal, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Ivory Coast. These countries have high prevalence rates of occupational injuries.¹ A paradigm shift will unavoidably require the involvement of many actors over multiple years, but initiatives like those of WHWB/SOFHYT may plant the seed.




Feedback from students has been enthusiastic and most ask for more in-depth training. This health and safety awareness training will be repeated regularly in 2023. In parallel to this initiative, the SOFHYT also proposed an e-learning training programme on the Fundamentals of Occupational Hygiene, for French participants. This module is based on the OHTA W201 programme, and has been summarised and presented in English by Steven Verpaele from the Belgian Society of Occupational Hygiene (BSOH) and the Belgian Centre for Occupational Hygiene (BeCOH).

Several SOFHYT members translated this module into French during the summer. The training was presented via Microsoft Teams for three days, to 10 students. Participants included new occupational hygienists, environmental health and safety officers, occupational physicians, and toxicologists. All were eager to know more about occupational hygiene. This first session was considered a success, and feedback from participants was very positive.

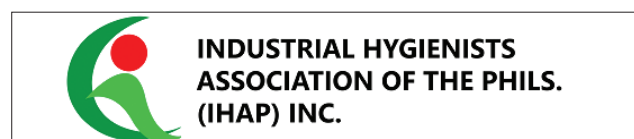
In 2023, the SOFHYT is planning a new training programme on the basics of occupational hygiene. This may be more tailored towards France with references to French regulations practices.

REFERENCES

1. Debela MB, Azage M, Begosaw AM. Prevalence of occupational injury among workers in the construction, manufacturing, and mining industries in Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *J Occup Health Epidemiol*. 2021; 10(2):113-126. 

Upcoming annual Asian Network Occupational Hygiene Conference

The 2023 annual Asian Network Occupational Hygiene (ANOH) Conference will be held at the Acacia Hotel, Alabang, Metro Manila, Philippines from 26 to 30 August 2023. The conference is being organised by the Industrial Hygienist Association of the Philippines Inc. (IHAP) in conjunction with the ANOH. The title of the conference is *Collaborate, innovate, adapt for the future of industrial hygiene in Asia*. The conference will include presentations covering a wide variety of technical issues in industrial/occupational hygiene.



The programme will include:

- Professional courses: 26 and 27 August 2023
- Symposium – keynote speakers, concurrent sessions, trade show, and gala dinner: 28– 30 August 2023 