



INTERNATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleagues,

The increased need for the development of our profession is obvious. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that it develops according to high professional and ethical standards. In many countries, there are efforts towards efficient training and reliable certification. In this issue, you may see contributions about National Certification Developments from colleagues Pierre Droz, Switzerland, and, Tai Wa Tsin, Hong Kong, as well as news on an additional type of certification to be put into effect this year by the ABIH, USA. To ensure the achievement and maintenance of professional competence is no easy task, therefore, it is important that sister associations help each other in this quest for quality, by sharing their experiences and concerns, as well as successes and difficulties. It is hoped that more contributions, as well as comments, will be received for the next Newsletter.

Under the heading "National Associations", some information on the Brazilian Association (ABHO) is presented, including, in fact, some words about certification. News from all national associations, including coming events (as the July conference in Venezuela) are most welcome.

An important subject, also presented in this issue, is that of Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems. International guidance in this respect is very needed and timely; IOHA and ILO relevant materials on this topic are available in the Web, and pointers are given in this Newsletter so that you may easily locate them. I would appreciate if those of you, who are particularly interested in this subject, would send us comments, including on any problems you may have personally encountered or observed in the application of management systems in your professional practice. In fact, I am preparing a list of relevant comments, to be taken to the ILO coming meeting on this subject, and your views would be very helpful.

There is also some news from WHO, Geneva. The programme on occupational and environmental health is lucky to have the collaboration of Dr Marilyn Fingerhut, seconded from NIOSH. WHO and the ILO have jointly developed an activity for Africa, which will greatly contribute to bring the benefits of occupational health to that part of the world.

More contributions, comments and suggestions from all affiliated associations and their members, as well as individual members and all readers of this Newsletter, are always most welcome. Comments and suggestions on the "IOHA Programme on Co-operation in Occupational Hygiene" are particularly important, as this topic will be discussed in the IOHA Board Meeting in New Orleans, 2-3 June 2001.

Hoping to see many of you at the AIHCE 2001 in New Orleans !

Best greetings to all,

Berenice Goelzer, CIH
Editor
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CERTIFICATION

For ease of reference, may I remind you that previous IOHA communications in this respect can be easily located, as follows:

“Certification of occupational hygienists: a survey of existing schemes throughout the world”, by A. Burdorf (1995) <http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/ioharef/iohacertsurv.htm>

Summary of Workshop in Blackpool 1995: <http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/workshops/iohacert.htm>

Summary by Vernon Rose, on the “IOHA International Workshop on Certification of Occupational Hygienists” London, November 1999: IOHA Newsletter of May 2000
[.http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/newsletters/news8_1.htm](http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/newsletters/news8_1.htm)

In this issue, we are presenting contributions from our colleagues in Hong Kong and Switzerland. It is hoped that contributions from sister societies in other countries will be received for the next issues, as well as comments, questions and suggestions, so that this section of the Newsletter will become a Forum of Discussion on this important subject.

HONG KONG

Development of Certification in Hong Kong, Registered Professional Hygienists (RPH)

Tai Wa Tsing (Hong Kong Institute of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene)

In year 2000, the Hong Kong Institute of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (HKIOEH) introduced a registration scheme and allow members to be registered in the list of RPH. The Registered Professional Hygienist scheme was set up with the aim of enhancing the professional development of Occupational Hygienists and of providing a path for persons who reach professional maturity in the field of occupational hygiene. The first step towards the continuous professional development programme is to join the registration scheme, which is equivalent to the certification scheme administered by other International Associations. Members, who have attained the qualification of the Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH), granted by the American Board of Industrial Hygienist (ABIH), or, the Diploma in Occupational Hygienist (DOH), granted by the British Examining Board of Occupational Hygienist (BEBOH) or equivalent, plus relevant working experience in the field, may be considered for admission to the register until 2001. From 2002 onwards, members have to take the local examination before admission to be RPH. In fact, in May 2000, the Institute had the first qualification examination for admission to the RPH. Members are required to pass two papers: one core paper and one advanced paper. At present, over 15 of the members (more than 20% of the full members) have been qualified and registered under the scheme.

As of March 2001, the Hong Kong Institute of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene invites colleagues from all over to visit has its new website at: www.hkioeh.org.hk

SWITZERLAND

Development of Certification in Switzerland

Pierre O. Droz, Ph.D., Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene

In Switzerland, occupational hygienists (OH) are legally defined and recognized since 1996, in an ordinance called "Ordonnance sur la qualification des spécialistes de la sécurité au travail", which can be see at: http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/rs/c822_116.html

Occupational hygienists are considered, in this «ordonnance», together with three other specialists: occupational physicians, safety engineers, and safety technicians. The requirements are the following:

- to have a technical or science diploma from a university or technical school, which is probably equivalent to at least a BSc;
- to have at least 2 years of practical experience;
- to have supplementary training, consisting of at least 100 days of theoretical training plus practical work (the total should be done over a 2-year period, which is, in fact, a postgraduate course, or, to have any other training judged to be equivalent, at present, by the Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene).

Based on this, the society has started to «certify» occupational hygienists. «Equivalent training» includes, for example, the CIH certification (by the US ABIH), or other national certification schemes. There is also a requirement on continuous education with maintenance points, through a system very similar to that of ABIH.

Therefore, occupational hygiene is now quite well defined in Switzerland. However, the whole process does not have yet quality criteria, and discussions have already taken place in the sense of going through an EN45013 certification process.

When the present situation in Switzerland is compared with the requirements put forward at the IOHA London meeting (November 1999), it is evident that there is still a need to improve our process, mainly as far as having a common examination procedure, and a certification committee, separate from the Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene. A EN45013 certification would be one way to proceed, although quite costly for a small society. There are other simpler ways. This matter has been discussed at the last general meeting of the society, held on March 16, 2001, in Kandersteg. It has been decided that we will set up an independent certification committee, and that the examination procedure will be improved, notably to facilitate acceptance of equivalent training. This should make our process fully compatible with IOHA recommendations.

Important steps concerning the certification process have already been taken in Switzerland, even though certain improvements are still needed, if it is to keep pace with developments in other countries; this would be important, if a universal acceptance of our profession is to become a reality.

USA

American Board of Industrial Hygiene (ABIH) <http://www.abih.org>

This year, the American Board of Industrial Hygiene will introduce a new industrial hygiene certification for professionals who have occupational (industrial) hygiene responsibilities, but do not qualify for the Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) designation. This will include EHS professionals who do not practice IH a majority of their total work time as well as those who primarily function in a single IH rubric area such as air pollution, ergonomics, health physics, etc. and do not meet the CIH requirement for broad-scope IH work experience. The basic qualifications for this certification, entitled “**Certified Associate Industrial Hygienist**” (CAIH) include:

- a bachelors degree with at least 30 semester hours of science and mathematics;
- IH college or PDC courses covering fundamentals, measurements, controls and toxicology;
- four years of post-bachelor, professional-level industrial hygiene experience (at least 25% IH activities), and
- the successful completion of a written exam

The certification will be designed to demonstrate the applicant's competence in applying the fundamental industrial hygiene knowledge and skills. As with the CIH certification, a five-year re-certification requirement will be built into the process and an application for third party accreditation through the Council of Engineering and Scientific Specialty Boards (CESB) will be submitted.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Brazilian Association of Occupational Hygienists

“Associação Brasileira de Higienistas Ocupacionais (ABHO)”

ABHO started, in August 1994, with 92 members and presently counts with more than 600 members from 20 Brazilian states. ABHO aims at the continuous promotion of Occupational Hygiene and the recognition of the profession of Occupational Hygienist in Brazil. The mechanisms for action include the promotion of training and other efforts towards the achievement of professional competence, including publications, and, exchanges of information and experiences. One of ABHO's endeavours is to promote, among colleagues, a spirit of collaboration, commitment and motivation towards the goal of protecting and promoting the health of our workers.

ABHO holds annual meetings, which bring together colleagues from all corners of Brazil to discuss topics of common interest and to exchange experiences. In order to promote more efficient dissemination of information, ABHO has now a Web Site (in Portuguese) at <http://www.abho.com.br/>

The newsletter “ABHO Atualidades”, which presents current occupational hygiene issues and includes a section on Questions and Answers, is also available on the Web Site.

The yearly translation into Portuguese of the ACGIH TLV Booklet has been an important contribution to practicing occupational hygienists in Brazil, particularly considering that, since 1994, these values have been officially accepted by the Brazilian standard on Prevention and Control Programmes (NR-9, Portaria n. 3.214/78). Last year, ABHO published the book “Programa de Prevenção de Riscos Ambientais - PPRA NR-9 Comentada” (*Annotated Brazilian Standard on Programmes for Prevention of Occupational Hazards – NR-9*), where this standard is discussed in-depth, with clarifications on the most usual queries and doubts concerning the practical application of the legal text.

A great challenge, shared with sister associations in many other countries, is to institute a certification scheme for occupational hygienists, which is essential to ensure an adequate level of competence of the professionals dedicated to protecting the health and life of our workers. At least initially, a certification scheme by ABHO will not have legal status since the profession is not yet officially recognized in Brazil, however, certification will demonstrate that those professionals were evaluated by their peers. The ABHO Board of Directors has been considering and discussing possible certification schemes, which would include written exams and practical assessments. Moreover, for maintaining certification, a professional will need to prove continued involvement with occupational hygiene practice, as well as efforts to update and upgrade their knowledge including, for example, participation in conferences, seminars and courses, writing and publishing.

Further information on ABHO can be found at the Web Site.

VENEZUELA

The “Asociación Venezolana de Higienistas Ocupacionales” (AVHO, created in December 1997) is co-organizing the “Conferencia Internacional de Higiene Industrial: Soluciones para la Productividad en el Nuevo Milenio” (*International Industrial Hygiene Conference: Solutions for the New Millennium*), which will take place in Caracas, 12-13 July 2001. The objective is to promote exchanges of experiences concerning strategies for the evaluation and control of occupational hazards. Many international participants will attend, including IOHA President Dr Vernon Rose and other colleagues from the USA. More than 200 participants are expected.

Further information may be obtained from Ing. Eric Omaña
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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Developments on the ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems

The Draft ILO Technical Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (OSH-MS), February 2001, available in English, French and Spanish, is the result of extended international consultations held during the last year. It will be submitted to a Meeting of Experts, to be held in Geneva from 19 to 27 April 2001, for examination and adoption as a Code of Practice, with recommendations which are non-mandatory (with "should" statements).

The Guidelines, accompanied by implementation documents, will be based on ILO values, established and agreed on by its tripartite constituents and expressed in international labour standards, codes of practice and other relevant documents. They are intended to provide basic requirements and to promote the introduction, monitoring and validation of uniform procedures and methods for the development and implementation of national and enterprise policies and principles.

The ILO Guidelines on OSH Management will take into account that OSH management-related programmes are already in use internationally (such as Responsible Care, Private Voluntary Initiatives, Corporate Social Responsibility, Good Practice in OSH, Codes of Conduct, ISO International Standards on Quality and Environment), and hence appropriate compatibility with them is being sought.

An Information Note has been produced, containing important clarifications on the background, steps taken, schedule, structure and scope of this ILO Guideline.

Details on the above are available in the WWW at:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/managmnt/index.htm>

- [ILO OSH-MS Guidelines](#) (draft)
- [Information note](#) on the ILO OSH-MS Guidelines
- [IOHA Report to ILO](#) on an International OSH-MS

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

New Staff

Marilyn Fingerhut, Ph.D., has been seconded to the Occupational Health Group at WHO in Geneva by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Marilyn served as the NIOSH Chief of Staff for the past six years, and will continue a relationship with NIOSH as Coordinator for International Activities. In her new WHO position she hopes to facilitate global partnerships among groups active in occupational safety and health.

WHO/ILO Joint Effort on Occupational Health and Safety in Africa

Summary, by Dr Gerry Eijkemans, WHO, Geneva

A WHO/ILO planning meeting on coordination of occupational health and safety for the African Region was held in Harare, March 7-8 2001. The meeting was organized by WHO and ILO, and included participants from Regional Offices and Headquarters of both organizations, and with experts from research centres in the region, as well as with experts from the host country Zimbabwe.

The background of this meeting is the urgent need for strengthening occupational health and safety in the African Region, responding to the hazardous work environments and the huge burden of occupational injuries and diseases. Coordination between WHO and ILO is necessary in order to be more effective and because workplace health and safety efforts take place under both Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour in many countries. In a previous consultation meeting the idea of an African Initiative on Occupational Health

was developed, to serve as an umbrella for actors and activities in the area, to develop a common framework and objectives, and to serve as a fundraising platform.

This follow-up meeting decided on the following:

The name for the coordination between WHO and ILO in the African region is:

The WHO/ILO Joint Effort on Occupational Health and Safety in Africa.

This replaces the former name: WHO/ILO African Initiative on Occupational Health

The areas of collaboration that were identified were:

1. Human resource development focused on capacity building
2. National policies, programmes and legislation
3. Information, research and awareness raising
4. Promotion of occupational health and safety in particularly hazardous occupations, vulnerable groups (including informal sector workers and children) and in newly transferred technologies

The following development objective was accepted:

The WHO/ILO Joint Effort on Occupational Health and Safety in Africa will improve conditions and environment of work in Africa, thus reducing the burden of occupational diseases and injuries, through intensified co-ordination of occupational health and safety activities.

The workplan is divided in short (Joint Effort Phase 1 Workplan) and long term. The implementation of Phase 1 starts in June 2001, and has duration of one year. Meanwhile, the long-term action plan will be developed for presentation to donors. It is expected that the activities from Phase 1 will give tangible results in a short period of time, since they are based on ongoing activities. This will increase visibility and credibility of the Joint Effort.

The Activities that were selected for Phase1 during the meeting are presented below. The final version of the Phase 1 Workplan will be agreed upon in the meeting in Benin, May 2001.

First approach of activities for Joint Effort Phase 1 Workplan

1. Human resource development focused on capacity building

- skills audit/harmonization workshop
- Training of Occupational Health and Safety Professionals
 - basic
 - specialized (e.g., by distance education): occupational medicine and occupational hygiene (twinning of institutions)

2. National policies, programmes and legislation

- Guidelines on development and implementation of National Policies and Programmes
- Guidelines on updating legislation
- Establish technical support units

3. Information, research and awareness raising

Establishment of:

- Information centers
- Web site/List server: improve circulation as information at country level (WHO), tools for gathering information on the ground
- A WHO/ILO Joint Effort Newsletter on the development and implementation of the effort

4. Promotion of occupational health and safety in particularly hazardous occupations, vulnerable groups (including informal sector workers and children) and in newly transferred technologies

- Implementation of Pilot project in the Informal Sector (vulnerable groups)
- Joint programme on OHS in Mining with a special focus on the elimination of silicosis

Coordination and Follow-up.

It was agreed to formulate an ad interim Taskforce, which will have the following terms of reference:

1. Prepare a draft Action Plan for the first year of activities
2. Circulate Action Plan for Comments to the members of the Taskforce
3. Include comments in Action Plan and prepare final Action Plan for the Phase 1
4. Present the Action Plan for Phase 1 in May 2001 in Benin, for adoption and implementation.

The Taskforce has an interim character, and the final coordination mechanism will be formalized in May, in Benin. It was proposed that the Taskforce has a rotating coordination mechanism. For the moment, WHO has assumed the responsibility of coordinating the taskforce until May 2001.

Global Occupational Health Network (GOHNET)

The overall development objective of GOHNET, recently launched by WHO, is to strengthen the interchange of information on occupational hazards and related health problems, with an emphasis on prevention, and to support training and research activities within the context of sustainable development.

Detailed information on GOHNET, which includes the GOHNET Newsletter and the GOHNET survey of users, can be found at:

http://www.who.int/peh/Occupational_health/occindex.html

IOHA NEWS

Programme on Co-operation in Occupational Hygiene

Some years ago the idea of a programme to pair people in countries where occupational hygiene was well developed and countries where this was not the case, was started under the name of Mentor Programme. Later on, the initial idea was reshaped into a new approach, under the more appropriate name of "Programme on Co-operation in Occupational Hygiene". Information on this initial effort, as well as its change to a new approach, is presented in the IOHA Site at:

<http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/ioharef/coop.htm>

As Paul Oldershaw mentioned in his Plan of Work (Edition 5, August 2000 - direct URL: <http://www.bohs.org/ioha/epubs/ioharef/iohapow.pdf>): *"This activity is central to the aim of IOHA in promoting occupational health/hygiene in communities where there is no national occupational hygiene society to provide professional support. It is hoped that by this means preventive action and the discipline will develop in those countries."*

As this topic will be discussed in the Board Meeting in New Orleans, 2-3 June 2001, it would be greatly appreciated if you kindly sent your comments and suggestions on this programme. Views from readers of this Newsletter, in different parts of the world, would certainly help the IOHA Board in further developing this programme in the most beneficial manner to all countries. Do not worry too much about sending perfect suggestions; just consider this as a "brainstorm". Please, remember that groups starting to practice occupational hygiene, often as an isolated effort in their countries, can greatly benefit from the support of more experienced colleagues. Moreover, the exchange of experiences can be very enriching to both sides.

BERGEN 2002

We want to invite you all to Bergen, to the 5th International Scientific Conference, 10-14 June 2002

A New Era of Occupational Hygiene,

by Bjørg Eli Hollund

In 2002, the Norwegian Occupational Hygiene Association, together with the International Occupational Hygiene Association, wants to focus on "Occupational Hygiene in the Future". What kind of new challenges will we meet in the coming years?

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) has been asked to give the opening speech, focussing on Globalisation. Several companies in the rich parts of the world are establishing themselves in the developing countries, and we would like to try to ensure that they take their high standards with them.

At present, we know much about different hazards in the workplaces, and also about how to protect the workers, but there are still a lot of people getting ill or killed at work. The occupational hygienist and the occupational physicians do not always use a language that is easily understood by the people "on the floor", so we will also focus on risk communication.

Another important theme, in a session organised by the Dutch OHA, is the use of chemicals from cradle to grave, including the recycling of certain wastes in building materials.

We also want to focus on different trades, especially those connected to the North Sea, since Occupational Hygienist from countries in that area have a lot of experience on hazards in the petroleum industry, fishing, shipbuilding and maritime transport of different chemicals. Other specific areas, which are of interest in different parts of the world, will also be covered in the Conference, including working conditions in high and low temperatures, diving and shift work.

There are always new methods and new strategies that occupational hygienists have to learn and discuss, and we have planned for this by including sessions on organic solvents, chemical allergens and dermal exposure.

At the end of the conference, we plan to arrange a session focusing on the challenges connected to "A New Era of Occupational Hygiene". In this session, we will try to follow the lines from the focus of occupational hygiene in developing countries, through present "state of the art" of interventions in the working environment, to the challenges we will meet in the future.

And, of course, we want to show you Bergen - situated on the western coast of Norway - a meeting place between fjords and mountains.

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