

AIHA Top Public Policy Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Issues

Biannual public policy survey indicates issues that are most likely to present concerns for the industrial hygiene profession in 2007-2008

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), as a result of its biannual membership survey, projects the top public policy issues of concern to AIHA members and the occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) profession over the next two years.

AIHA has identified the following as the top public policy issues for 2007-2008:

OSHA Issues

Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) Updating

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) PELs are consensus-based limits that indicate how long an individual can be exposed to a particular substance without experiencing harmful effects. The occupational health and safety profession considers PELs to be one of the most basic tools needed to protect workers. However, many PELs have not been updated since the 1970s. Science in this area has matured, but the PELs have not. AIHA continues to work with OSHA and others to reach a consensus on the best way to update the PELs.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) / Globally Harmonized System (GHS)

AIHA supports efforts to improve the accuracy of MSDS and supports efforts to improve hazard communication for employers and employees. Such efforts are also a crucial element in protecting workers and others in case of national emergencies. A major part of improving hazard communication is adoption of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS). AIHA supports adoption of the GHS.

Nanotechnology

The increased use of nanotechnology in our daily lives raises concerns that we may be unaware of the occupational health and safety concerns when working with this new technology. AIHA supports increased research into the possible hazards involved with nanotechnology.

Safety and Health Programs/Injury and Illness Prevention Programs

AIHA fully supports efforts to ensure that employers incorporate a written safety and health program into workplace policies.

Generic Exposure Assessment

AIHA supports continued guidance on the process used to determine exposure assessment. With the increased discussion about specific assessment strategies, AIHA

will continue to monitor the discussions and work for assessment strategies that best protect workers.

Other OSHA issues AIHA members find most important are hazard communication issues and pandemic preparation and response.

Legislative Issues

Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) Updating

Many of the PELs have not been updated at OSHA since the 1970s. Much of this is because of the regulatory process that, while providing for input from all stakeholders, stretches the process to a point where it takes a considerable number of years to update even one PEL. AIHA supports taking a closer look at whether or not a legislative solution may be achieved, whereby the process could be simplified for a small number of PELs that require updating.

OSHA, NIOSH, EPA Appropriations

Protection of workers and research and education efforts in support of worker health and safety are not possible without adequate federal resources dedicated to the issue. While OSHA and NIOSH have fared reasonably well over the past several years, continued concern over the federal budget deficit could create the need to reduce expenditures in this area. AIHA believes that OSHA and NIOSH must remain adequately funded to carry out their statutory responsibility to ensure that every worker who goes to work returns home safe and healthy. AIHA also supports adequate funding for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Professional Recognition/Title Protection

This issue continues to appear in the top public policy issues for AIHA, as it has since 1993. Professional recognition/title protection allows industrial hygienists and others who have met minimum educational and experience requirements (such as certified industrial hygienists and certified safety professionals) to be legally defined and recognized as competent to perform certain work without the need for additional requirements. While some form of professional recognition/title protection legislation has been enacted in 19 states, AIHA continues to educate federal and state policymakers about the importance of recognizing those professionals who have received education and certification from nationally recognized and accredited organizations.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

AIHA supports legislative measures that further incorporate programs for emergency preparedness and response. AIHA believes that both federal and state legislation is needed to clearly define the kind of programs needed and the resources to put these programs in place.

Laboratory Accreditation

Accredited laboratories are the best way to ensure that test samples of potential workplace hazards are analyzed correctly. AIHA continues working to see that the AIHA laboratory accreditation program is noted in federal and state legislation and regulation as one of the programs with national recognition and acceptance.

Other legislative issues AIHA members find most important are the Globally Harmonized System (GHS), Expanding OSHA coverage to all public employees, and the legislative threat to limit the reference to the Threshold Limit Values (TLVs).

AIHA makes these issues a priority within its government affairs efforts and strives to keep occupational health and safety in the forefront with federal and state policymakers.

Association Issues

In addition to public policy issues, AIHA members also ranked the top issues of overall importance to AIHA. The top association issues are:

- The legislative, regulatory and legal concerns regarding the Threshold Limit Values (TLVs)
- Standards, whether they be from ANSI or other standard-setting bodies
- Professional Ethics
- Collaboration with other OH&S organizations
- The Globally Harmonized System (GHS)