

AIHA Top Public Policy Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Issues

Biennial public policy survey indicates issues that present concerns for the industrial hygiene profession in 2011-2012

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), as a result of its biennial membership survey, lists 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.

The 2011-2012 survey was divided into various categories. While providing results for the highest ranking issues in each category, AIHA has also identified the overall top public policy issues for the association in 2011-2012.

The survey was conducted on-line in October, 2010.

AIHA will review existing white papers and position statements, as well as draft new position statements, to determine the appropriate response to each of the issues.

Overall Top Issues for 2011-2012

- **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 1960s and 1970s. Science in this area has matured, but the PELs have not. AIHA continues to work with OSHA, Congress and others to reach a consensus on the best way to update the PELs.

- **Injury and Illness Prevention Program (I2P2)**

OSHA is developing a rule to require employers to establish and maintain an Injury and Illness Prevention Program. It involves identifying and controlling hazards as well as planning, implementing, evaluating and improving processes and activities that protect employee safety and health. AIHA has been providing leadership in the development of OHS management science and practice since its inception. AIHA supports the need and importance in defining effective occupational health and safety programs and the acceptance in the IH and safety community that hazard assessment and implementation of a written safety and health program are parts of minimum acceptable professional practice on any work site.

- **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.

- **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. One area of concern is the continued influx of specific occupational health and safety titles

that are awarded by non-accredited bodies and the attempt to recognize these titles in various policy making activities. 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.

- **OSHA Reform and NIOSH Recognition**

Each year Congress introduces and considers legislation to amend the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This legislation addresses many parts of the OSH Act, including criminal penalties, whistleblower protections, expansion of coverage, and the Voluntary Protection Program. AIHA supports efforts to review and amend the OSH Act if changes provide added protection for workers. AIHA also supports efforts to protect the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) from attempts to diminish the importance of the Institute and its research. AIHA supports appropriations to adequately fund both OSHA and NIOSH.

- **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 internationally recognized and noted in federal and state legislation and regulation as one of the programs with recognition and acceptance.

Individual Categories OSHA

Most important issues identified by AIHA members for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

- Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) - Updating
- Injury and Illness Prevention Program (I2P2)
- Ergonomics
- Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for Classification/Labeling of Chemicals
- Noise/Hearing
- Risk Assessment
- Combustible Dust

Federal/State Legislative Issues

Most important issues identified by AIHA members for Federal and/or State Legislative Activity:

- Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) – Updating
- Appropriations for OSHA, MSHA, NIOSH, EPA
- Federal Contracting – Must comply with OSHA regs to receive
- Professional Recognition/Title Protection
- Expansion of OSHA coverage to all employees

Environmental Protection Agency Issues

Most important issues identified by AIHA members for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Hazardous and Toxic Waste
- Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for Classification/Labeling of Chemicals
- Clean Air Act
- Clean Water Act
- Nanotechnology

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:

- Collaboration with other OEHS organizations
- Professional Ethics
- Standards (ANSI, ASTM, etc.)
- Injury and Illness Prevention Program