



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Release No. SPR-13-1024-01

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OSHA Renews Focus on Outdated Permissible Exposure Limits

AIHA applauds OSHA's efforts to bring the issue of outdated PELs back to the table

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (October 24, 2013) — The American Industrial Hygiene Association® (AIHA) is encouraged by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) decision to reopen the discussion on outdated PELs.

To that end, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels has announced the release of two new, Web-based resources to provide employers, workers and other stakeholders with a list of alternate occupational exposure limits. OSHA has created a [toolkit](#) to assist employers and workers in identifying and substituting safer chemicals to use in place of more hazardous ones. In addition, OSHA has developed an [Annotated Occupational Exposure Limits table](#) that provides accurate and up-to-date chemical information to employers who want to voluntarily adopt newer, more protective workplace exposure limits for those chemicals that are covered by outdated OSHA exposure standards.

“Updating the PELs has been the number one public policy issue for the association since the mid-1990s and for the first time, we are seeing some real movement from the government sector on this issue,” said AIHA President Barbara J. Dawson, CIH, CSP. “AIHA encourages employers, workers and other interested parties to look closely at OSHA's list of alternate exposure limits because they will bring us closer to updating the PELs.”

AIHA assumed a leadership role on the issue of outdated PELs by adopting its first [position paper](#) on the subject in 1998. The paper highlighted six specific statements on PELs, specifically calling for OSHA to update the existing PELs to current science and set new PELs to protect worker health. The majority of the existing PELs are based on recommendations that were made more than 30 years ago and continue to have a major impact on the industrial hygiene profession.

“AIHA will do everything possible to see that this effort to recognize the problem of outdated PELs is a step forward by OSHA and the federal government to address this issue. Despite the limited resources of the agency and the long list of regulatory and enforcement concerns, Dr. Michaels recognized the importance of this issue to occupational safety and health and we're grateful to him for his leadership on this effort,” added Dawson.

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About AIHA®

Founded in 1939, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) is the premier association of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals. AIHA's 10,000 members play a crucial role on the front line of worker health and safety every day. Members represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, government and academia.