



HEALTHIER WORKPLACES | A HEALTHIER WORLD

# Occupational Exposure Limits

Position Statement

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[aiha.org](https://www.aiha.org)

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Developed by the AIHA Exposure Assessment Strategies Committee

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It is the position of the American Industrial Hygiene Association that:

1. Exposure limits such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs), and other Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs) are primary tools in disease prevention, and are an essential part of a comprehensive occupational safety and health program.
2. OSHA and other standard setting organizations should seek whatever resources or legislative changes are needed to allow the updating of existing OELs to current science, and to set such new OELs as necessary to protect worker health.
3. OSHA and other standard setting organizations should select chemicals for OELs based on scientific principles, risk determinations, and specific criteria developed with all stakeholders.
4. When designing exposure monitoring programs to determine exceedances, employers must assign a statistical interpretation to an OEL. Therefore, OSHA and other standard setting organizations should provide guidance regarding suitable statistical interpretations of their OELs. Employers can thus design effective performance-based exposure monitoring programs that are consistent with the expectations of OSHA and other standard setting organizations.
5. OSHA and other standard setting organizations should adopt a peer-reviewed guideline for the derivation of OELs. AIHA believes that OELs must be based on the best scientific information available and must include a well-documented critical evaluation of the supporting information. Appropriate uncertainty factors also must be applied to compensate for the inherent uncertainties in the existing data and extrapolation to human populations.
6. Employers have a responsibility to assess the risks to the health of their workers and adequately control worker exposures to hazardous substances or agents for which there are no OELs. Employees must be fully consulted in the development of these risk assessments and informed of the results. Tools such as occupational exposure banding, a hierarchy of OELs approach, and risk-based quantitative analyses should be employed where appropriate when OELs are not available.
7. OELs should be consistent across occupational populations and should be accepted by federal agencies when the goal is protecting occupational health.

Questions regarding this position statement may be directed [here](#).

## ABOUT AIHA

AIHA is the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community. Founded in 1939, we support our members with our expertise, networks, comprehensive education programs, and other products and services that help them maintain the highest professional and competency standards. More than half of AIHA's nearly 8,500 members are Certified Industrial Hygienists, and many hold other professional designations. AIHA serves as a resource for those employed across the public and private sectors and the communities in which they work.



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