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# Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs)

Position Statement

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Developed by the AIHA® Exposure Assessment Strategies Committee

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Updated and Approved by Board of Directors: September 29, 2002

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

1. Exposure limits such as OSHA's PELs are a primary tool in disease prevention and are an essential part of a comprehensive occupational safety and health program.
2. OSHA should seek whatever resources or legislative changes are needed to allow the updating of all existing PELs to current science and to set such new PELs as necessary to protect worker health. In the meantime, OSHA should select chemicals for PELs based on scientific principles, risk determinations, and specific criteria developed with all stakeholders.
3. For compliance purposes OSHA has defined PELs as values not to be exceeded. When designing exposure-monitoring programs to determine exceedances, employers must assign a statistical interpretation to the PEL. Therefore, OSHA should continue to provide guidance regarding suitable statistical interpretations. Employers can thus design effective performance-based exposure monitoring programs that are consistent with OSHA's expectations.
4. OSHA should adopt a peer-reviewed guideline for the derivation of PELs. AIHA believes that PELs 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.
5. 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 PELs. Employees must be fully consulted in the development of these risk assessments and informed of the results. Tools such as occupational hazard banding, a hierarchy of OELs approach, and risk-based quantitative analyses should be employed where appropriate when PELs are not available.
6. PELs should be consistent across occupational populations and should be accepted by other federal agencies when the goal is protecting occupational health.



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AIHA | 3141 Fairview Park Dr., Suite 777 | Falls Church, VA 22042 | [aiha.org](http://aiha.org)