American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) expands sector-specific guidelines for business re-opening

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9 SEPTEMBER 2020, FALLS CHURCH, VA, USA

As businesses, schools, retailers and manufacturers manage reopening due to the pandemic, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) continues to expand its library of comprehensive Back to Work Safely guidelines, white papers, and resources, aimed at 26 different business and community sectors. The latest guidelines include recommendations on engineering controls (ventilation, enhanced filtration and physical barriers), germicidal ultraviolet radiation, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, and personal hygiene and physical distancing:

- Reducing the Risk of COVID-19 Using Engineering Controls
- Employers Guide to COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection in Non-Healthcare Workplaces
- Effective and Safe Practices, Guidance for Custodians, Cleaning and Maintenance Staff
- Occupational Safety and Health Guide for Surface Disinfection Practices Using Germicidal Ultraviolet Radiation
- Infographic: Considerations on the Safe use of UVC Radiation for Surface and Air Disinfection

"While many solutions rely primarily on PPE, AIHA scientists and health professionals have developed more comprehensive guidelines which are specific and written with small to mid-sized businesses in mind. The guidelines include practical checklists that point out ways the employer, employees, customers and visitors can minimize their risk", said Lindsay Cook, AIHA president.

"The AIHA Back to Work Safely guidelines include engineering and work practice solutions that complement the effective utilization of masks. They offer a detailed view of how ventilation can be an effective control in non-healthcare and non-industrial workplaces, and how employers can develop specific cleaning and disinfection programs."

The AIHA and its volunteer committees of industrial hygienists urge employers to implement engineering controls in all indoor workplaces, even those outside of the healthcare industry, to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The broad categories of engineering controls that may be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 virus include:

- Physical barriers, enclosures, and guards
- Automatic door openers and sensors
- Local exhaust ventilation
- Enhanced filtration to capture infectious aerosols
- Devices that inactivate or 'kill' infectious organisms
- Dilution ventilation and increasing outside air delivery

"Using a combination of available technologies, equipment, and time-tested methods to control infectious aerosols is the most reliable way to reduce the risk of disease spread", said Cook.

Guidelines are freely available in English and Spanish for the following industries:

- Amateur sports
- At-home service providers
- Bars
- Business services
- Childcare providers
- Construction sites
- Dental office settings
- General office settings
- Gyms and workout facilities
- Hair and nail salons
- Houses of worship
- Institutions of higher education
- Libraries
- Museums and collecting institutions
- Physical and occupational therapy, massage therapy
- Retail
- Restaurants
- Rideshare, taxi, limo and other passenger driver-for-hire services
- Schools K-12
- Small manufacturing and maintenance shops
- Small entertainment venues (e.g. mini golf and arcades)
- Small and medium sports facilities
- Small lodging establishments
- Street vendors and farmers' markets
- Transit systems
- Warehousing/transportation

All resources are available for download from www.backtoworksafely.org. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) includes a link to these guidance documents on its website. Additionally, COVID-19 resources on personal protective equipment (PPE) and re-entry into the workplace hazards can be found at the AIHA Media Outreach Center.

The AIHA Back to Work Safely task force is comprised of more than a dozen highly-trained and experienced occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) scientists and professionals, representing various business sectors: government, industry, higher education and consulting.

European platform for Professionals in Occupational Hygiene – current status and recent advances

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As early as 2016, there was discussion of a European platform for Professionals in Occupational Hygiene (EPOH). Currently there are eight professional organisations in the loosely joined consortium:

- AEHI, Spain
- AIDII, Italy
- BOHS, United Kingdom
- BSOH, Belgium
- DGAH, Germany
- NVvA, The Netherlands
- SOFHYT, France
- SSHT, Switzerland

The objectives of the EPOH platform are:

- To promote the harmonisation of occupational hygiene (OH)-related methods, standards and guidelines,
- To serve as a contact point and discussion partner for European Union (EU) staff/institutions,
- To contribute to schemes of training, qualification or certification in OH in the context of a common EU regulation,
- To exchange OH knowledge and practical field experiences,
- To strengthen the communication and collaboration between the different European associations, and
- To create more visibility of OH as a profession at the European level.

The current priorities for the platform are focused on chemical hazards, in the context of the "Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances" campaign driven by the EU occupational safety and health (OSH) Agency, for 2018–2020. In association with those priorities, the EPOH platform identified three technical topics and one strategic topic to be focused on for further development:

- Hazard and control banding strategies,
- Carcinogenic and mutagenic agents, and skin exposure control,
- Interaction between registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH) and OSH regulations, and
- Harmonisation of OH education and training.

The EPOH is set up as a working group of representative members from each organisation. They meet, virtually, approximately every second month, and try to have annual face-to-face meetings. A coordinator, designated every two years from among the platform's members, takes care of organising and conducting meetings, and representing the platform.

Members of the EPOH are currently working on the drafts of two position papers. One is on skin exposure of carcinogenic and mutagenic agents in the workplace, and the other is on the REACH programme and OH.

The EPOH is currently working with IOHA to see how best the organisations can collaborate in the future. At this time, all of the EPOH participants are also IOHA members but, in the future, there may be other professional organisations in EPOH with members who are not members of IOHA. For now, a memorandum of understanding to foster support and engagement between IOHA and the EPOH is being developed. In addition, IOHA is making space on its webpage for information on the EPOH, and its projects and activities.