

OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE LIMIT REVIEW

On April 26, 2004, the Ontario government announced an annual revision system for occupational exposure limits (OELs). This revision system to update OELs is based on stakeholder input on limits recommended by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). Exposure to hazardous substances is a major cause of occupational illness that in turn can have a devastating impact on workers and their families. It also adds significant costs to businesses through lost productivity and higher workplace insurance premiums.

What are OELs?

Regulated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, OELs restrict the amount and duration of workers' exposure to hazardous workplace substances, such as asbestos, benzene, lead and silica. Ontario currently has OELs for over 700 substances.

Previous updates

OELs were first adopted into regulation in Ontario in 1986. They were based on the then current (1985) limits recommended by the ACGIH. Updates were made to OELs in 1994, 2000, 2004 and most recently in 2005.

What substances are included in these consultations?

New OELs for two substances are being proposed.

- Coumaphos
- Monochloroacetic acid

Revised OELs are being proposed for the following 14 substances:

- Calcium sulphate
- Carbon disulfide
- 1,2-Dichloropropane
- Fenamiphos
- Fenthion
- Fonofos
- Gypsum
- Iron Oxide (Rouge)
- 2-Methoxyethanol
- 2-Methoxyethyl acetate
- Silica - Tridymite
- Propylene
- Ronnel
- 1,1,2,2-Tetrabromoethane

Existing OELs for 10 substances are being proposed to be removed as per the recommendations of the ACGIH. The ACGIH concludes that there is insufficient scientific evidence to support an OEL for the following:

- Diatomaceous earth
- Silica fused

- Magnesite
- Perlite (a)
- Precipitated silica
- Silica fume
- Silica gel
- Silicon
- Tetrasodium pyrophosphate
- Vegetable oils

As well, it is being recommended that multiple forms of crystalline Silica that currently are listed separately be combined into one listing. It is being recommended that the allowable exposure limit for all forms of crystalline Silica be reduced to make it more protective.

For more information on these proposals, go to the Ministry of Labour website at http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/oels/06_oels.html.

The consultation process

The government is initiating the consultation process for the 2006 annual review. Stakeholders are invited to review the proposal and make written submissions on the proposed limits, including the practicality of implementing and complying with any or all of the proposed limits.

To participate in the consultation, stakeholders can download a copy of the proposal from the Ministry of Labour website (www.labour.gov.on.ca) and submit comments to the ministry. Copies of the proposal are also available by calling 416-326-9299.

Stakeholders are also invited to nominate substances for development of an OEL during the consultation period where the ACGIH has not recommended a limit or does not have a limit under development. In doing so, the submission should include a proposed limit and supporting documentation.

Deadline for submissions

Comments should be sent in writing by September 30, 2006 to:

The OEL Update Project
Ontario Ministry of Labour
400 University Ave., 12th Fl.
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7
Fax: 416-326-7889
Phone: 416-326-9299
E-mail: 2006oelupdateproject@mol.gov.on.ca

-30-

Contact:
Belinda Sutton
Ministry of Labour
416-326-7405

Disponible en français

www.labour.gov.on.ca