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Thank you to members who voted on the amendments to our organization's bylaws. Of the 54 ballots returned (representing 27% of our voting membership base of 199) 50 (92.6 %) voted yes to the amendments, 3 (5.6%) voted no and 1 ballot was spoiled. The majority of the changes were updating the bylaws to reflect current conditions and clarify the intent of a number of sections (as opposed to making major direction/policy changes in the governing of the organization).

A visible change which will be noticed is that "Full" members have been reclassified to "Professional"; and all "Affiliate" members have been reclassified to "Associate". There is no change in the "Associate", "Emeritus", "Honorary" and "Student" membership categories.

Otto Peter, Monica Szabo, Michael Grey, and Peter Fletcher were responsible for the detailed fine tuning of the document and I think I speak for everyone when I say their efforts are greatly appreciated!

The AIHce 2008 was held in Minneapolis in the first week of June. I don't know the total number of Canadians at the conference but there appeared to be a fairly strong showing. 75 attended the Canadian dinner, which was organized by the CCOHS at a restaurant called Gluecks. It was also easy to find fellow Canucks by observing the enthusiasm for the last round of the NHL playoffs in the downtown pubs late at night (so I heard anyway, I was in my hotel

reviewing my technical session notes by that time).

On Monday afternoon, a roundtable session was held entitled "Occupational Hygiene: A Canadian Perspective". The talks given were as follows:

- Luc Hamelin from the University of Quebec gave an overview of Activities of the Canadian Registration Board of Occupational Hygienists for 2008 and future challenges.
- Jan Chappel from CCOHS spoke on the Past Present and Future of Occupational Hygiene in Canada.
- Karen Bartlett from the University of British Columbia gave an overview of graduate training for Hygienists across Canada.
- Richard Quenneville of T. Harris Environmental, updated the audience on current Activities of the Canadian Council of Occupational Hygiene.
- Aaron Tripler from AIHA discussed the costs and benefits of Title Protection for professionals.

The opening general sessions was relatively well attended (for a moderate to small AIHce) and a few highlights stood out for me. Jeremy Rifkin, internationally respected economist and author gave a thought provoking talk on the sunset of the fossil fuel era and how it is going to impact workplaces and our lives in the very

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OH Forum is published quarterly by the Occupational Hygiene Association of Ontario, and distributed free of charge to all members.

Deadlines for articles and advertising are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
February	10 th of January
May	10 th of April
August	10 th of July
November	10 th of October

Enquiries or suggestions should be directed to:

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Circulation: 300

Vol 31, No. 3

The Occupational Hygiene Association of Ontario is an Ontario-based organization whose members are dedicated to the practice of occupational hygiene. Occupational hygiene is concerned with the protection of people's health from hazards arising in or from the workplace.

To develop and promote the profession of occupational hygiene, and to serve the interests of our members by:

- sponsoring professional development, training and research;
- promoting public and legal recognition;
- developing partnerships with stakeholders;
- providing public education;
- fostering communication and networking through publications and meetings.

President's Message... cont'd from page 1

near future – possibly sooner than previously thought as a number of oil producing countries may be nearing “peak” oil production (after “peak” occurs, production decline ensues). At Wednesday’s general session, a slick promotional video of the city of Toronto presented the audience with an excellent prelude to next year’s AIHce in Toronto. As the video ended, a renowned violinist from Toronto, Dr. Draw, walked on stage and performed a powerful solo, and in keeping with the video’s theme helped portray Toronto as a diverse city with a lot to offer.

Speaking of next year’s AIHce, there is early planning with respect to organizing a Canadian reception/dinner with support from a broad range of Canadian hygienists and organizations (CCOHS, CRBOH, CCOH, OHAO). The University of Toronto is also planning a reunion dinner on one of the evenings. More details to come on both of these events. The local Conference Committee (Paul Bozek being the committee chair) may still be looking for some volunteers for some of the local activities. I’m assisting Paul with this so if anyone is interested feel free to let me know.

Sounds like nice programs are shaping up for OHAO’s Fall Symposium planned for October 16th (more to come from Alberto Behar later in this issue) and the PDCs on October 15th and 17th (Welding Health and Safety Hazards, Control Banding, Technical Writing Workshop).

We are still looking for hygiene related pictures for a promotional presentation on hygiene and OHAO so please send them if you have any to the OHAO office, Altaria Hildebrandt, Len Hong or myself.

Jason Hoffman, MHS, CIH

Meet Your Colleague

Interviewed by Alberto Behar

Christine Sidhom M. Sc. (A), CRSP, CIH, Occupational Hygienist, Mount Sinai Hospital

It wasn’t easy to get an interview with Christine. She is the quiet type, who prefers to work rather than talk. However, I managed to discover some facts about her.

Christine holds a B.Sc. in Biochemistry and an M.Sc.(Applied) in Occupational Health, both from McGill University. Since November 2007, Christine has held an interesting position at one of the largest hospitals in Toronto. Because of the complex hospital environment involving permanent staff as well as ambulatory and interned patients, she deals with a cohort of occupational hygiene problems. She is also involved with the hospital’s health and safety issues. She really enjoys the multiplicity of situations she has to face on a daily basis.

Twelve years ago, Christine entered the occupational hygiene field, attracted by the fact that it is a health related field. She looked at it as a means of preserving

health and well being of persons while they are at work. She also liked the fact that there are so many different fields of interest such as toxicology, engineering, law, management, etc.

Christine has worked at Concordia University as an industrial hygienist and prevention coordinator as well as at the CBC for seven years. This gave her the opportunity to develop her experience at field workplaces, involving different challenges. For instance, at the university she was facing a steady environment, where the researchers came every day to the same workplace, however, one never knew what project would present itself, from engineering to visual arts. However, in the radio and TV industry, employees could go anywhere and be involved in completely different environments and occupations.

Through Christine’s career experience, she

has learned that good communication is essential to the success of her work. And that is something Christine would like to stress to anyone getting in this field.

Christine recognizes McGill’s Professor Dr Farant as her mentor from the technical perspective. He has always been available when help was needed. She also credits all her supervisors for teaching her the soft skills, including trusting her “gut feeling”, something important for making decisions in a hurry or in difficult or tense situations.

Christine has served on the board of directors of the Quebec Health and Safety Association (the AQHSST). She also served as one of the first provincial representatives at the CCOH.

Since last year she is the Editor of the *OH Forum* and you can see her smiling face in every issue.

Studying for the ROH and the CIH

Yang Ting Shek, ROH, CIH

Editor's note:

The following article was first printed in the Winter 2008 Newsletter of the Canadian Council of Occupational Hygiene (CCOH) and is reprinted here with permission from the author, who is also the newsletter's editor. The CCOH and some of the regional and provincial associations across the country have recently agreed to share the articles that are submitted by volunteers. For more information on the CCOH, please consult <http://ccoh.ca/>.

Over the last couple of CCOH meetings, when the group discussed possible topics for webinars, it became obvious to me that finding topics that are of interest to everyone across the country is not as easy as it seems. Depending on the industrial backbone of our home provinces, our interests will vary somewhat but I think it is safe to say that striving towards our ROH and/or CIH is a common career milestone for the majority of us. I do not intend to tell you how to study. We have all crammed and studied our way through university and know ourselves and our study habits quite well (well, some of us may be in denial). Instead, I just want to write down a couple of thoughts from my own experience and hope that they will be helpful to those of you who are preparing to write.

Logistics

The ROH written exam (multiple choice and essay question style) is usually written in the last Saturday of March of each year (except if that is Easter weekend and in that case, it takes place the following Saturday). There are two windows of opportunity for the CIH exam (multiple choice only) depending on your geographic location (April/May and October/November). One cannot choose the ROH exam date but I selected a similar timeframe for the CIH (towards the end of May). Person-

ally, I did not want to study in the summer when the sun is shining and the days are long (in a good way). But that is a personal preference. I know some individuals who decided to write the ROH and CIH in the same year. I did not but I can see how that makes sense as well since you are reviewing the same material

For both exams, I started about 4-5 months ahead of time. On average, I studied 6-10 hours on the weekend and 2-3 hours during the week. I go on business trips frequently and I find it difficult to study those times even if I have taken the material with me. I cannot tell you if that is enough time or more than enough time. As I said before, you should know your study habits by now. However, I think it is important to spend an hour or two to go over what you plan on studying and identifying areas of weakness. Depending on your actual job, you may be very well-versed on certain aspects of occupational hygiene. Similarly, there will be topics that you have not looked at since univer-

The ROH Oral Exam

When you pass your written ROH exam, you qualify to take an oral exam. The ROH Examination booklet states that the oral exam evaluates "the candidates' problem solving skills, breadth and depth of

knowledge, professional judgment, communication skills and ability to respond to stressful or changing situations."

Scenarios are presented to the candidate and the candidate must discuss how they would solve the problem presented to them. It is difficult to describe how you prepare for this session. Having strong investigative skills is definitely an asset (i.e. describing how you would solve a problem). Knowing what a good occupational health control program should look like is also important. By that, I mean there are common threads in successful, well-implemented occupational health programs regardless of what agent you are trying to control (e.g. worker training, communication with workers, regular reviews of the program, documentation, etc.).

Materials

There are numerous resources available for occupational hygienists and it is not possible to discuss all of them. For one thing, I doubt I have studied all of them! This section is not meant to advertise any particular resource but are highlights from my own experience:

- Taking time to read the ACGIH TLV booklet cover to cover. Most of the time we dive straight for the exposure

limits but it is important to remind ourselves, from time to time, the intent of the TLVs and the reasoning behind them.

- Reviewing potential exposures in various industries. This is a huge subject and where does one begin and end? I cannot tell you where to end but William A. Burgess' chapter on Potential Exposures in the Manufacturing Industry - Their Recognition and Control in Patty's IH was a good starting point for me.
- A nice summary book. One of my favorites is the IH Reference and Study Guide by Allan Fleegar and Dean Lillquist, published by the AIHA. It is a small book and excellent if you just have a quick 15 minutes or half an hour. It covers a wide range of hygiene topics and most chapters end with list of "one-liner" trivia. It is what I would call, a "high level" review. The information is provided in bullet points and tables and there are lots of formulas. In addition to being a good review tool, I felt it helped me determine if I was studying the right topics.
- Fine-tuning your investigative skills. Aside from knowing technical facts, part of being a hygienist is knowing how to investigate occupational health problems/concerns/issues. A good book I came across is Case Studies in Industrial Hygiene, edited by Jimmy L. Perkins and Vernon Rose. The scenarios are described in the beginning of each chapter and you try to solve the issue at the end of chapter based on the informa-

tion provided. If you feel you need to brush up on your investigative skills, it is a good way to start. As discussed above, the ROH oral exam is designed to test your problem-solving skills. The scenarios in the book are also industry-specific so that is another way to learn about industries outside of your own work experience.

- Does anyone have a good environmental book for hygienists? This is the one area I struggled with. I do not have experience from my job and I have never been able to find a good resource on this subject. I only remember a couple questions on this subject on both exams but it always bothered me that I did not feel prepared for it. Fleegar and Lillquist do cover the topic in one of the chapters. If anyone has some good advice about this topic, I would be glad to publish the information in the next newsletter.

In addition, there are various CIH preparation CDs. The CDs contain lots of practice question and some of them will provide you with a score in each category so you can see what you need to work on. It is also good to practice your time management skills. There are various CD products around but the one I happen to be familiar with is from a company called LabChem.

Courses

The most widely known is probably the Comprehensive Industrial Hygiene Review course that is held by the University of Michigan. This course is co-sponsored by the AIHA. There are usually two sessions, held in March and September of

each year <http://www.engin.umich.edu/dept/ioe/COHSE/compreview.html>.

If you search on the internet for comprehensive industrial hygiene review courses, you will find a number of providers in the US including well-known universities such as Berkley and the University of California-Irving. The University of British Columbia also offers a review course. The UBC brochure states the course is for both ROH and CIH exam candidates. Obviously if you attend a US course, the majority of people are preparing for the CIH. While some of the technical information will be the same, the two exams are formatted differently (as discussed above).

At the time I was studying for the ROH exam, I attended a comprehensive review course offered by the University of Cincinnati. It was not clear from their website if they continue to offer this course but you can contact them directly: <http://www.eh.uc.edu/ih/>. I subsequently studied for the CIH exam about a year and a half later. I did not attend another course but definitely reviewed my Cincinnati course notes and the practice questions.

Review courses cover a wide range of topics and last approximately five days. It is not possible for me to review and compare all these courses since I have only attended one but my overall feeling is that the Cincinnati course was helpful to me. A colleague of mine attended the Michigan course and also gave positive feedback. We also shared material from the courses with each other.

Some individuals I know never took a course and succeeded in their exams.

My personal feeling is that you will get a lot more out of the courses if you study before hand. It gives you an opportunity to ask concise questions in class rather than waste your time on simple concepts which you would have understood had you spent the time studying, test yourself with practice questions given to you during the course, focus your energy on the more difficult questions/areas of weakness and follow up areas of weakness with the instructor.

Another way to look at it is to take the course at the very beginning of your studies so you have an idea of what to study for. It is a fair point but you do not know what your areas of weakness are at the beginning. In some hygiene courses I have taken, the instructors have been good about giving out their email addresses and stating that students can contact them if they have questions after the course so that is another way to manage it.

The AIHA also offers a course called "AIHA Secrets to Success: Preparing for the CIH exam." It is offered as a teleweb and it was available at the AIHce in Philadelphia last year.

Conclusion

Now that it is all behind me, I am happy to have written both exams. I had other feelings while I was still studying but achieving professional certification is a worthwhile milestone.

Health Physics



—Column Editor—
Michael Grey, CHP, ROH
SAIC Canada

Recent Events in Radiation Protection

The international Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) published the "2007 Recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection" in February of this year. This document (ICRP-103) updates and revises the 1990 Recommendations (ICRP-60). The Commission's objective for the revision was to incorporate new biological and physical information and recent trends in radiation safety regulation but otherwise to remain as consistent with the previous Recommendation as was practical. It is anticipated that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will update its "Basic Safety Standards" (BSS) to incorporate the new Recommendation and that the revised BSS will be available in 2010 (although this date is probably optimistic). It is also anticipated that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission will update the "Radiation Protection Regulations" to maintain consistency with the ICRP Recommendations but a target date for this work has not been announced.

Amendments to the "Nuclear Safety & Radiation Devices Regulations" and the "Class II Nuclear Facility Regulations" were registered on April 17, 2008. The "Nuclear Safety & Radiation Devices Regulations" generally apply to small industrial and institutional users while the

"Class II Nuclear Facility Regulations" apply to larger research and therapeutic facilities in hospitals and universities. Some of the changes include provisions for the release of equipment and wastes contaminated by trivial quantities of radioactive materials from regulatory control.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has approved its guidelines on the "N292" for publication. These guidelines are intended to provide advice on the minimization, handling, packaging, storage and disposal of radioactive waste. The CSA has also initiated a new work item on the clearance of waste contaminated with trivial quantities of radioactive material from further regulatory control. When they are eventually published (probably 2010), these guidelines will provide advice on the actions required to comply with the recently amended "Nuclear Safety & Radiation Devices Regulations".

Health Canada has announced a revised guideline for radon levels in indoor air. The guideline value was reduced from 800 Bq/m³ to 200 Bq/m³. Health Canada has also conducted a series of workshops across Canada to provide stakeholders with information on the new guideline value and its implications. Further information is available from the Radiation Protection Bureau of Health Canada.

Noisy News



—Column Editor—
Alberto Behar, PEng, CIH
Adjoin Professor,
University of Toronto

A new NRR? – No, they are two!

Almost 30 years ago, the American Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced the use of the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR)[1]. Its use would provide an easy way of calculating the noise level of the protected ear [2] by simply subtracting the NRR from the ambient noise level measured in dBC. If the noise level was measured in dBA, then 7 dB should be added to the result of the subtraction.

Shortly after the institution of the NRR two facts became apparent:

- a) There was a race between hearing protector manufacturers to obtain the highest possible NRR,
- b) Results from Lab measurements performed following the then ANSI standard [3] were overly optimistic, resulting in attenuations not found in real-life situations.

The ANSI Working Group WG11 "Hearing Protector Attenuation and Performance" has been actively working in both fields: proper measurement of protectors and proper calculation of the noise level of the protected ear. Two standards have emerged as a result of the WG11 work.

The first is the ANSI S12.6-1997[4] that contains two methods for the measure-

ment of the protectors. The first, Method A, is in a way similar to that in the previous standard. The second, Method B, differs basically in using "naïve" subjects - persons that have no previous experience wearing hearing protectors. Attenuation results using Method B are generally smaller than those from using Method A. However, both methods have merits and applications, which is the reason for keeping them both in the Standard. Both methods are also included in our CSA Standard.

The ANSI standard S12.685 has been recently developed to specifically address the issue of the calculation of the noise level of the protected ear, using the attenuation data of a given protector. In a quite novel approach, a new descriptor, the Noise Reduction Level Statistics (NRSA) is computed on a large dataset of industrial noise spectrum. It also takes into account the inter-subject variability. In other words it accounts for the variability among noises and people.

Instead of one value of the NRSA, it is reported as two numbers that represent the attenuation experimented by 20% and 80% of the exposed population. This is done in order to reflect both the variability of the noise spectrum content among different noises found in the real world and of the change in the attenuation by different individuals.

One of the descriptors corresponds to users that can get the best out of the protector, because of their training and motivation. This is the NRSA of 20% of the population and it has the largest value. The second is the NRSA of the 80% of the population reflecting that the majority

of workers do not get a large attenuation because of lack of training and/or motivation.

It will be the job of the safety specialist at a given workplace to determine which of the descriptors should be used, taking into account the training and motivation of the workforce at that particular place.

It is expected that the EPA will adopt the NRSA in the course of 2008/9. Once adopted, the manufacturers' labels will have both descriptors on the protector's containers in the same way as they do it presently with the NRR. The only difference will be that, instead of one descriptor, there will be two.

In summary, get ready to see shortly a new label on the protector's containers with not one, but two descriptors.

Endnotes

- [1] EPA (1979). "Noise Labeling Requirements for Hearing Protectors", Environmental protection Agency, Fed. Regist. 44(190), 40CFR Part 211,56130-56147
- [2] Noise level equivalent to the one the subject would be exposed to without the protector.
- [3] ANSI (1974) "Method of the Measurement of Real-Ear Protection of Hearing Protectors and Physical Attenuation of Earmuffs". American National Standard Institute, S3.19-1974 (ASA STD 1-1975), New York, NY
- [4] ANSI (1977) "Method for measuring the Real-Ear Attenuation of Hearing Protectors", American National Standard Institute, S12.6-1997, New York, NY.
- 5) ANSI Method of Estimating Effective A-Weighted Sound Pressure Levels When Hearing Protectors are Worn. American National Standard Institute, S12.68-1997, New York, NY.

We Did It: The Paperless Office

Carl Woychuk, MHS, ROH, CIH

The reduction of paper is the single greatest action that can be done for environmental sustainability in office work and related business. iTTUKKi Corp (GroupEHS) presents their story.

While conducting an environmental impact assessment of our own business, we realized that the use of paper accounted for most of our waste. Even though the paper was shredded and sent to recycling, we believed we could do more.

2004

Initial steps were taken in 2004 when it was decided that all client related documents, final reports, etc. were to be delivered in electronic format only. A new filing system was created on the server. Documents and folders were classified as they had been in the past but now in electronic format. The last fresh package of 500 sheets of paper purchased by our company was in August 2004!

The impact on client and employee habits was anticipated and further steps were planned but not executed until later. From 2004 to 2006 all printers were removed except for one unit linked to the network via the server. Employees were allowed to print a document for temporary use. This was needed since we recognized that working with only one monitor may pose a problem when researching and comparing documents.

The printer during this time was loaded with draft paper (already used on one side). All sheets of paper were used twice then shredded and recycled.

2005

The milestone in 2005 was the set up of a 100% paperless fax system. By then, paper was used very seldom in the office. Official documents were signed electronically and all proposals and contracts were handled the same way.

2006

The last toner cartridge for the lone printer was purchased during 2006. Employees and clients have generally become comfortable with the paperless environment.

2007

Additional flat screen monitors were purchased and all workstations were equipped with stereo video ports to allow side by side viewing of documents across extended monitors. The lone printer was taken off-line. As of 2007, there are no printers in the iTTUKKi Corp (GroupEHS) offices.

2008

And now? Well, we are getting bolder. We have now removed the fax line. We realized that other parties continued to use paper fax machines. We have removed our electronic fax machine to force our clients and suppliers to use emails and electronic documents. The result has been positive.

We no longer respond to requests for proposals which oblige us to produce paper copies of the proposal document.

We choose not to do business with prospective clients who cannot adhere to our paperless policy. The following statement is the first sentence of our contractual Terms and Conditions: "In line with our

corporate value of environmental sustainability, the client agrees to conduct business with us in a paperless fashion as a condition of this contract." Feel free to use it in your contracts.

From a business perspective, one may argue that opportunities may be lost by imposing our value of environmental sustainability to this extent; however, we continue to bring on many new clients who continue to collaborate with us.

Benefits

Our paperless experience over the past four years has been very encouraging. We no longer purchase paper and related products. Each employee manages a small budget for notebooks, and agendas. We have not purchased any pens, highlighters, staples, paperclips, or notepads since 2004 because many of these items find their way into the office from third party promotions.

The workplace looks cleaner – there is no clutter. We also have a lot of extra space since we no longer need filing cabinets.

Planning

This narrative does not show the planning and collaborating required for going paperless. Stay tuned for a future article which will bring to light some of the challenges and planning required for going paperless.

Carl Woychuk, MHS, ROH, CIH is President and CEO of iTTUKKi Corp where he also works as Sr EHS Counselor in the GroupEHS division.

F1

—Column Editor—

*Jim Desormeaux, OHST, COHC
Ontario Power Generation*



Global Positioning Systems

The navigator in the passenger seat said to the driver that she thought this wasn't the right way to the rental cottage. The driver said that he knew where he was going... until they hit a dead end. They pulled out their trusty MapQuest (<http://www.mapquest.com/maps/>) piece of paper and tried to figure where they are. Sound familiar? Another good program that I used was Microsoft's Street and Trips (<http://www.microsoft.com/streets/default.msp>). The benefit of that program was it had features to help you create custom routes, set driving preferences, plan breaks, and calculates travel costs, and the trip planning software made travel easier, whether you were going around town or anywhere across the U.S. and Canada. However you still ended up with a piece of paper in your hand. It was not very interactive.

Then came along the GPS system. It was very expensive initially, but prices have fallen so much that the average driver can now afford one. The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a worldwide radio navigation system that is formed by a constellation of 24 satellites and the appropriate ground stations. Think of the satellites as stars in the sky and are used as reference points to calculate positions accurate to meters. Basically it gives every square

meter of earth a unique address. You now become a reference point for your location on earth. By using four measurement distances to the satellite, it can narrow down your location to within a meter. Here are some quick facts:

- GPS is funded by and controlled by the U. S. Department of Defense (DOD). While there are many thousands of civil users of GPS worldwide, the system was designed for and is operated by the U. S. military.
- GPS provides specially coded satellite signals that can be processed in a GPS receiver, enabling the receiver to compute position, velocity and time.
- Four GPS satellite signals are used to compute positions in three dimensions and the time offset in the receiver clock.

GPS Navigation such as Garmin GPS (<http://www.garmin.com/garmin/cms/site/us>) or Magellan GPS (<http://www.magellangps.com/>) or TomTom (<http://www.tomtom.com/>) are used to help you see where you are right now, and to help you get from Point A to Point B. There are numerous devices made for GPS Navigation, from hand-held units, to those that are installed in cars and commercial vehicles. These are basically considered mapping systems. Each has very limited recording (tracking) capability, and generally do not have the ability to create and upload detailed logs of vehicle travel.

Many businesses have already invested in mapping systems to increase productivity by improving route planning, and personal navigation systems are becoming widespread. You can also get a GPS receiver that you can use with your portable

computer and software mapping system to provide GPS mapping right you're your personal computer, from makers including: Deluo (<http://www.deluogps.com/>) and Microsoft (http://www.microsoft.com/streets/ProductDetails.aspx?pid=001&active_tab=Overview)

Here are just some of the features to look for when purchasing a GPS System:

- Probably the most important feature is the clarity of the images or data on the screen. The size of the screen should be from 4 inches to 7 inches
- The device should be easy to operate. Play with a demo version in the store
- Vocal instructions (voice command instructions) should be specific and clear. Many of the systems will now tell you which street to turn as opposed to saying "turn left"
- Make sure that the system offers multiple routes
- Look for Bluetooth technology, so that interaction or communication with others during the drive will be easier.

For further information on features of a GPS system check out http://www.ehow.com/how_6844_select-gps-car.html

If you have any comments or questions direct them to jim-desormeaux@hotmail.com



Managing OHS & E



—Column Editor—
Ray Ilson, MEng, CIH, CRSP,
CRPA (R)
University Health Network

Attacking Workplace Violence

Everyone should be able to work without fear of violence, in a safe and healthy workplace. Violence in the workplace is not tolerated in Ontario (http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/workplace_violence.html).

Workplace violence is likely more prevalent than you may believe. The Ontario Ministry of Labour defines it as “the attempted or actual exercise of any intentional physical force that causes or may cause physical injury to a worker... and includes any threats which give a worker reasonable grounds to believe he or she is at risk of physical injury”.

The Ministry provides a number of jobs that involve higher risk (handling cash, transporting people/valuables, working alone etc) and that the risk of violence is greater in health care (towards nurses in particular by patients, family and possibly other medical staff), education (between students and teachers, management), and of course, social services, police, security and corrections.

Ontario uses the general duty clause under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, including the requirement of “all employ-

ers to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of their workers in the workplace”. This includes protecting them against the risk of workplace violence.

Suggestions for workplace violence prevention include an assessment of the risk, the development of a workplace violence prevention program, training of employees and reporting of concerns to the employer and/or the police. Employers should consider such assessments in cooperation with the Joint Health and Safety Committees. These requirements have implications under the OHSA since they will be subject to review by the Inspectorate and possibly C-45 federally. Let’s start with the assessment process. The employer is to perform an assessment of the risk. Will this be based on past experience? This would not necessarily be a good predictor since, from personal experience, I can tell you that one employer had three worker deaths due to violence (two murders and possibly a third) in a period of a very few years following a history of no such obvious indication of violence.

What about ‘industry’ experience? I have worked in health care and educational institutions for many years. Historically violence was rare but now we have experienced Ecole Polytechnic, Dawson College, Columbine, Virginia Tech... Asking management? Is this feedback really going to reflect or acknowledge violence, particularly between co-workers (arguing, shoving matches.)? Can we really expect management to admit to a lack of control in their workplace? As part of the assessment one might ask about the potential for violence, that is,

- a) Are you aware of any potential for violence by or to your staff (shouting, being shouted at, threatening, obscene language...)?
- b) Are you aware of violence that happens in workplaces similar to yours?
- c) Are you aware of the conditions which may increase the risk of employees encountering violence?
 - a. See the list above (handling cash, people under the influence of drugs/alcohol...) and various MOL websites across the country
 - d) Are there any activities or features of the workplace (e.g. rooms used for disciplinary or dismissal actions with one exit) that you believe may trigger violence?
 - e) How frequently may this or does this occur?

Asking management these questions may not accurately reflect the views of the workers. However, it would certainly raise the awareness of management to the issue and hopefully result in either immediate corrective actions or a request for review and assistance from the legal or human resources staff.

A front-line approach, possibly through the use of an anonymous or confidential on-line survey may capture a more accurate picture of the actual workplace situation. Yes, there may be “outliers (liars)” but the use of such widespread input should result in more reliable data, from a broader perspective while raising awareness throughout the organization. Such an approach also sends the message to employees that management is seeking such employee input and will be expected to report back on the findings, corrective actions, training etc.

Now when we ask the questions listed above, we should obtain a better estimate of the possibility or probability of violence occurring. We will also be able to address the issues more directly.

Basically, the approach would be to establish a risk management approach of likelihood/probability and consequences/outcomes to the best of our ability, then prioritize our response in terms of need, resources etc. The point, and the due diligence defence, is to reduce the probability of such events and to minimize the potential impacts should such an event occur.

From a management and organizational point of view, we would have to consider what we are currently doing to manage the risks already identified or which arise as a result of the survey. Of course, there will have to be documentation of the results and follow-up actions, and these will have to be publicized at least within the organization. On a regular basis, the survey would have to be repeated for current feedback and to note trends of improvement reported by the workers, again part of your due diligence defence.

More on this next time.

2008 Fall Symposium October 16

Preliminary Announcement

Announcing the program for the next Fall Symposium, prepared by the OHAO Program Committee. There will be more details in the next issue of the *OH Forum*.

Preliminary Schedule

0800 - 08:15	Jason Hoffman: President's welcome
08:15 - 09:45	Steven Levine: Tribute to the fallen
09:45 - 10:15	Anna Anniadis: Safety Regulations and upcoming priorities for Ontario Region Labour Program.
10:15 - 10:45	Exhibits and refreshments
10:45 - 11:00	Exhibitors' presentations
11:00 - 11:45	Daniel Drolet: Computer tools to help occupational hygienists
11:45 - 12:00	Michel Crepeau: Asbestos Wipe Sampling – Methodology and Outcomes
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch
13:00 - 13:45	Arthur Scott: Radon in Homes, Offices and Workplaces
13:45 - 14:15	Meet your colleagues and refreshments
14:15 - 15:15	Marshall Chassin: Hearing Loss in the Workplace
15:15 - 16:15	Sergey A. Grinshpun: Respiratory Protection against Airborne Particles: Major Milestones and Challenges

Mark your calendars and plan to attend October 16. Watch your mail for registration information.

University of Toronto MHS and MEng Occupational/Industrial Hygiene Alumni

In 2009, it will be the MHS/MEng-OEH Program's 30th anniversary! It is time for a celebration! A Reunion will be held sometime during the AIHce (May 30-June 4, 2009) in Toronto. More information will follow in the coming months as things are planned/scheduled. Please send your contact information, including your name, address (email and mailing), and phone number, so you can be contacted with details to: p.bozek@utoronto.ca



Editor's Message

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer. I am pleased to bring you this issue of the *OH Forum*.

For the first time, we are reprinting an article from the CCOH Newsletter. Collaboration between our two newsletters will provide a perspective from across the country in matters related to occupational hygiene.

I also want to bring to your attention three opportunities for consultation by occupational hygienists. You have many opportunities to have your say.

First of all, the Ontario Ministry of Labour started a 60-day consultation for changes to the 2008 occupational exposure limits for hazardous workplace substances.

There are OELs for over 725 chemical substances, mostly based on the ACGIH limits. The deadline for submission is September 18 and for more information you can read the newswire at http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2008/07/18/c5724.html?lmatch=&lang=_e.htm. Copies of the proposal are on the Ministry of Labour's website, or are available by e-mailing the OEL Update Project at oelupdateproject@Ontario.ca. After the consultation period, the MOL staff will review stakeholder submissions and hold focussed meetings with concerned stakeholders as necessary. Based on consideration and analysis of feedback from stakeholders, MOL will develop recommendations for ministerial

approval concerning appropriate exposure limits for the proposed substances.

Secondly, the International Council on Nanotechnology, ICON, is asking occupational health and safety experts to provide input, via a survey, on a new resource - mainly a Wiki website - for sharing information about safe handling of nanomaterials in occupational settings. ICON is a coalition of individuals from all sectors: academia, industry, government and non-governmental organizations. The survey can be found at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fNfePVsuKX8rvhvYNhMgrQ_3d_3d and the ICON Good Wiki website is at http://cohesion.rice.edu/CentersAndInst/icon/projects.cfm?doc_id=12207.

Finally, there is another survey from the Independent Research Group on the Impacts and Applications of Mobile Telecommunications in Health in Brazil making an assessment of the extent of knowledge, experience and opinions of occupational health professionals about the possible health risks of workers who are exposed to electromagnetic fields in the range of radio frequency and microwaves such as those used in TV, radio, radar, mobile telecommunications, welding, diathermy, etc. After answering the 25 questions, survey participants will receive a set of 12 full-text PDF papers, ICNIRP and WHO statements and standards, scientific and technical literature reviews, and other documents that will assist in

keeping up-to-date with the current information in this field. The survey can be found at <http://www.esurveyspro.com/Survey.aspx?id=6006eba8-4aff-4f5f-8ef2-247d310a09b5>.

Contributions to the *OH Forum* are always welcome. I hope to hear from some of you soon. Enjoy the rest of the summer.

Christine Sidhom

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