



IOHA

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GLOBAL EXPOSURE MANAGER

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Dear readers,

There is a phrase that comes to mind when I read through this edition: the work is everywhere. It is happening in laboratories and lecture halls, at CERN near Geneva, in classrooms in New Zealand, in communities across the developing world, and on conference stages from Sydney to Mombasa. And it is being done by people who have chosen, often quietly and without fanfare, to push this profession forward.

This issue opens with beryllium – a hazard that, despite its long industrial history, still demands our attention. Beth Walker and Dr. Josef Sobieraj's summary of the BHSC webinar is a reminder that even well-studied hazards require sustained advocacy, ongoing education, and dedicated communities to keep best practices alive.

"IOHA en Español" is back, and this time with a technical feature. Dr. Ana María Salazar challenges us to look at noise differently. Her article on the non-auditory effects of noise, such as cardiovascular strain, cognitive fatigue, disrupted sleep, and eroded quality of life makes the case that our management of this hazard has for too long been "ear-centric". The damage is systemic, and our response needs to be too.

Kirsty Thomas invites us to reflect on how the profession learns and teaches – an increasingly important conversation as digital platforms reshape access to education globally. And from New Zealand, Lucre Pfefferman shares a decade of determined capacity building: from a single pilot course in 2013 to a nationally funded, internationally recognized training infrastructure. It is a story that inspires and national associations can learn from.

Garrett Brown and Richard Hirsh bring us the remarkable ongoing work of the Developing World Outreach Initiative (DWOI) and the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN): nearly 20 years of building occupational health capacity in communities that need it most, across more than a dozen countries. What is striking in their project tables is the range of industries they touch, from shipbreaking in Bangladesh to garment production in Nepal, from electronics in Mexico to brick kilns in Pakistan – sectors that employ millions of workers globally but remain underserved by occupational health professionals. Each entry underscores both the scale of these labor forces and the pressing need to extend the protective reach of the profession into places where it is still scarce.

EDITOR'S LETTER

IOHA President Matthew Olotu closes with a sweeping account of global engagement: from the IEA's informal work technical committee to conferences across Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific. The message across all of it is consistent: occupational hygiene must reach beyond formal employment, beyond well-resourced jurisdictions, and beyond those who already have access to our profession's protection.

GEM is built by its community, and it grows stronger every time a new voice joins the conversation. If this issue sparks something – a thought, a project you want to share, or a story from your own corner of the field – we would genuinely love to hear from you. Details on our next issue's themes and how to contribute are in the closing pages.

Thank you to every contributor in this edition, to the GEM editorial team for bringing it all together, and to all who continue to support IOHA's mission of creating safer, healthier workplaces for every worker, everywhere.

Samantha Connell
Editor, GEM Magazine



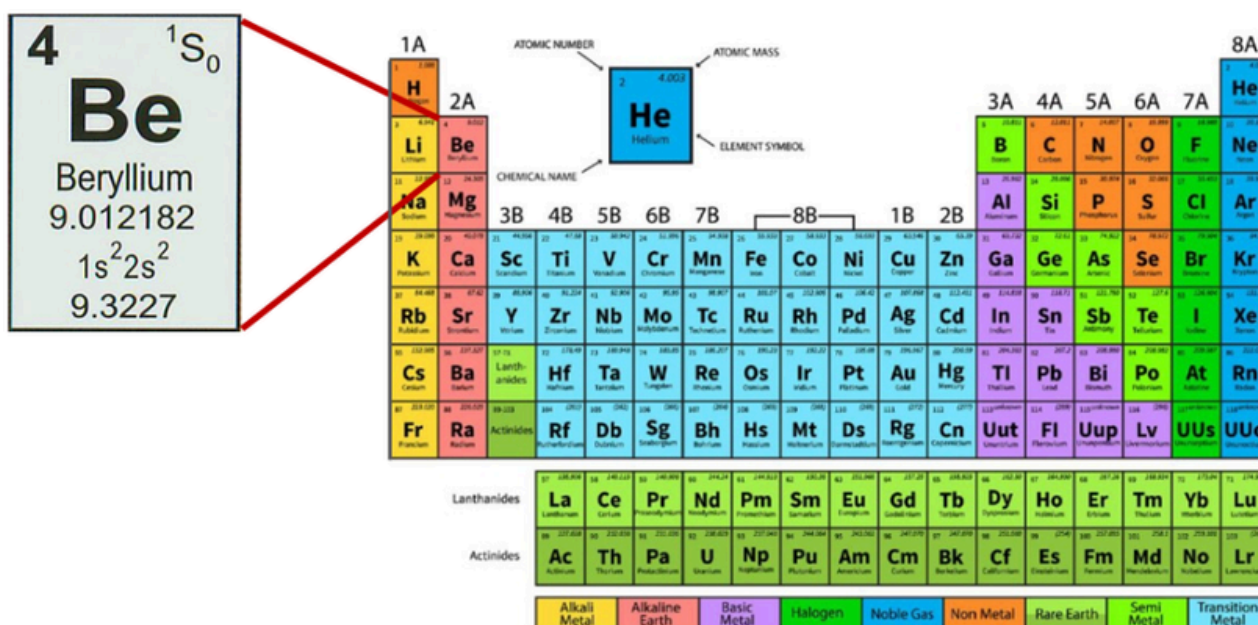
**Proud to support education and training for health
and safety professionals across the globe**

The editors acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence in assisting with editing this newsletter.

Beryllium: Historically, Today, and the Committee Leading the Way

Beth Walker, BHSC Vice Chair, safereenvironmentltd@gmail.com

On February 25, 2026, IOHA hosted a webinar featuring Dr. Josef Sobieraj and Beth Walker from the Beryllium Health and Safety Committee (BHSC). More than 170 participants joined to learn about beryllium's properties, hazards, and controls, as well as the activities of the BHSC. For a summary, see below, and consider signing up for the BHSC 2026 Spring Meeting on April 29-30, held by CERN near Geneva. You'll find the registration link at the end of the article.



The Periodic Table of the Elements showing the location of beryllium as 4th element. Image source: Dorn, 2023

Because beryllium is considered a specialty metal and it is relatively expensive compared to most other metals, there is a common misperception that these aspects must be due to its scarcity. In fact, beryllium is less abundant than its neighboring low-Z elements in the Periodic Table, but its level of occurrence is comparable to those of other elements with atomic numbers over 40.

specialty status is because beryllium is not often found in sufficient concentration and quantity to be viably mined. The circumstances of beryllium's abundance go back to the origins of matter during the so-called "Big Bang." While most 'low-Z' elements were created through that original fusion/ synthesis process, beryllium was not. It was created later through the destruction of supernovas (Vangioni-Flam et al., 1999 and 2000).

The reason for its high cost and

Beryllium was discovered in 1798 but was not widely used in industry until the 1940s and 1950s. In industrial applications, beryllium can be used as pure metal, mixed with other metals to form alloys, processed to salts that dissolve in water, and processed to form oxides and ceramic materials. In mechanical applications, beryllium metal is prized for its low density (30% lighter than aluminum) and high stiffness (50% stiffer than steel), an unusual combination of properties. Beryllium also has remarkable nuclear properties, thanks to its low atomic

- Mirror substrates and other components in laser-optical scanning systems
- Satellite mirrors and space telescopes
- Inertial guidance systems and gyroscopes
- Neutron moderator or reflector in fission test reactors, which also make medical radio-isotopes for cancer treatment
- Coolant and neutron breeder in molten salt fission reactors
- Plasma-facing material and neutron multiplier in fusion reactors

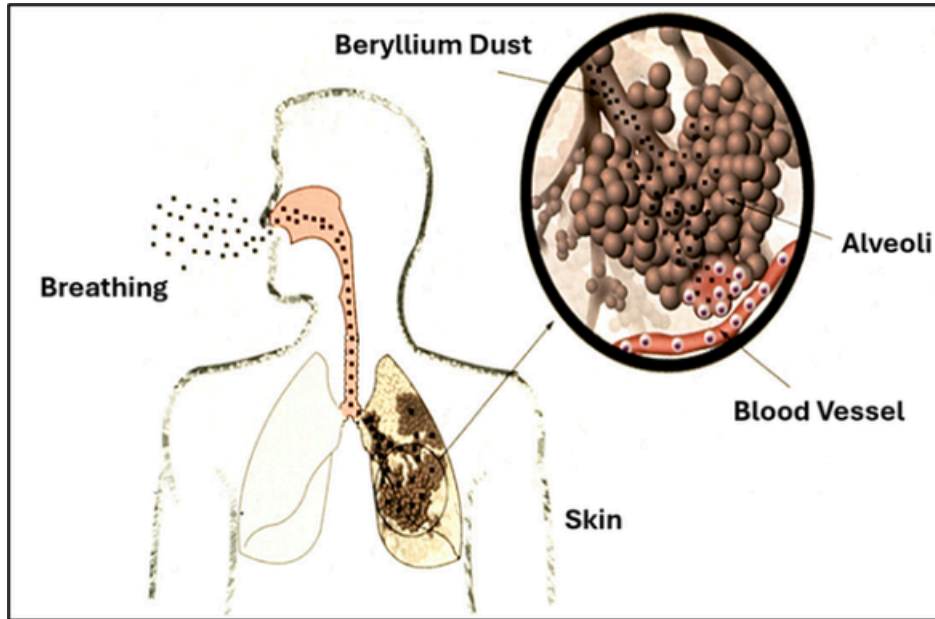


Uses of beryllium Image source: AI generated

number (element number 4 on the Periodic Table), which make it a reflector and multiplier of neutrons, as well as highly transmissive to x-rays. Both structural and instrument grade materials are manufactured, primarily for use in aerospace and defense with examples including:

- Transmission windows for x-ray source tubes and detectors (medical and analytical)
- Nuclear weapons components

Beryllium is also commonly found in copper-beryllium items, such as Electrical Connectors and Components and Non-Sparking Tools.



Beryllium Dust and the Human Body. Image source: National Jewish Health.

Beryllium can also pose a risk when in contact with skin or able to enter the body, through cuts for example. This exposure can contribute to, or lead to BeS, but a lung burden is still required for CBD to develop.

However, with the correct controls, and adopting simple principles,

beryllium can be safely handled. These include basic concepts such as segregation, enclosure and personal protective equipment/respiratory protective equipment. It is important to follow the standard hierarchy of controls, ensuring the engineering and collective controls are selected first.



Worker using HEPA filtered vacuum to clean a beryllium area. Image source: beryllium practitioners guide 2nd edition

Beryllium Health and Safety Committee

The Beryllium Health and Safety Committee (BHSC) was established by academic, government, and industry leaders to provide a forum for sharing beryllium information and best practices. Meetings have been held annually since 1995 with a recent hiatus due to the COVID pandemic. The BHSC mission is primarily educational, and information is disseminated to members and other interested parties. The formal mission tenets include:

- Promoting the safe use of beryllium
- Obtaining a better understanding of exposure risks
- Improving exposure monitoring
- Fostering improved controls
- Accumulating and disseminating information concerning beryllium process best work practices, and data from health studies concerning the beryllium hazards
- Training / Mentoring of beryllium health professionals
- Identifying and promoting research that has the potential to enhance or improve our worker safety programs

The BHSC is comprised of beryllium leaders from academia, government, and industry who appreciate the unique properties of beryllium and share best practices for controlling its hazards. The BHSC creates a forum for meeting and discussing ideas, publishing information, and establishing effective networks for solving problems.

The BHSC 2026 Spring Meeting will take place on 29-30th April and will be hosted by CERN at their site near Geneva (see Beryllium Health and Safety Committee (BHSC) - Events, Meetings). Please contact Chris Dorn, Dr. Josef Sobieraj or Beth Walker with questions about the BHSC and upcoming Spring Meeting. Or you can register here:

<https://indico.cern.ch/event/1626055/overview>.

- There is no registration fee.
- The last date to register for In-person participation is 15th April.
- Virtual registration can occur until the 28th April.



BHSC at ITER. Image source: BHSC website



El Enemigo Invisible: Impacto Integral de los Efectos No Auditivos del Ruido en el Ámbito Laboral y la Calidad de Vida

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Introducción

Históricamente, la higiene ocupacional en el mundo ha abordado el ruido desde una perspectiva unidimensional: la protección del sistema auditivo. Los marcos regulatorios a nivel mundial, se han centrado, en establecer límites para prevenir la Hipoacusia Sensorineural Laboral (HSNL). Sin embargo, al llegar al año 2026, la frontera de la medicina del trabajo se ha desplazado hacia el estudio del impacto sistémico y biopsicosocial de la exposición al ruido. El ruido no solo afecta al órgano de la audición; es un contaminante físico que penetra en el sistema nervioso central, alterando procesos biológicos, psicológicos y sociales.

Los efectos no auditivos del ruido son las alteraciones orgánicas y conductuales que experimenta una persona expuesta a niveles de presión sonora que, si bien pueden no causar sordera inmediata, actúan como un estresor crónico. Este artículo analiza estas patologías "invisibles", su impacto en la productividad y la urgente necesidad de integrarlas en la gestión de riesgos de las empresas modernas.

1. La Fisiología del Estrés Acústico: El Cuerpo bajo Amenaza

El oído humano está diseñado evolutivamente como un sistema de alarma. No tenemos "párpados auditivos"; siempre estamos escuchando. Cuando el cerebro percibe un ruido industrial fuerte, constante o impulsivo, lo interpreta como una amenaza potencial. Esto desencadena una respuesta inmediata del Eje Hipotalámico-Pituitario-Adrenal (HPA) y del Sistema Nervioso Simpático.

A. El Impacto Cardiovascular

Es el efecto no auditivo más documentado y peligroso. La exposición al ruido activa la liberación de catecolaminas (adrenalina y noradrenalina) y glucocorticoides (cortisol). Estas sustancias provocan una vasoconstricción periférica, aumentando la resistencia vascular y, por ende, la presión arterial.

Estudios epidemiológicos han demostrado que los trabajadores expuestos a niveles superiores a 80dBA durante jornadas de 8 horas presentan un riesgo significativamente mayor de desarrollar hipertensión arterial crónica y enfermedades isquémicas del corazón, como el

infarto agudo de miocardio. El ruido no solo sube la presión en el momento; con el tiempo, remodela las paredes de las arterias, acelerando el proceso de aterosclerosis.

B. Alteraciones Metabólicas y Endocrinas

El cortisol elevado, conocido como la "hormona del estrés", tiene un impacto directo en el metabolismo de la glucosa. El ruido crónico se ha vinculado con la resistencia a la insulina, un precursor de la Diabetes Tipo 2. Asimismo, el estrés oxidativo generado por el ruido a nivel celular afecta el sistema inmunológico, dejando al trabajador más vulnerable a infecciones y retrasando los procesos de recuperación física.

C. Trastornos Digestivos

El sistema digestivo es sumamente sensible a las señales del sistema nervioso autónomo. Bajo estrés acústico, el flujo sanguíneo se desvía de los órganos digestivos hacia los músculos (respuesta de lucha o huida). Esto deriva en una motilidad intestinal irregular, hiperacidez gástrica y un aumento en la incidencia de úlceras duodenales y síndrome de colon irritable entre trabajadores de sectores como la metalmecánica y la minería.

2. Efectos Psicológicos y Salud Mental

La salud mental es, quizás, la dimensión más afectada en la calidad de vida del trabajador. El ruido excesivo erosiona la paciencia, la resiliencia y el bienestar emocional.

A. La Fatiga Cognitiva y la Carga Mental

El cerebro humano tiene una capacidad limitada de procesamiento. En un ambiente ruidoso, el cerebro debe realizar un esfuerzo constante de "atención selectiva" para ignorar el ruido de fondo y concentrarse en la tarea. Este proceso consume glucosa y energía neuronal de manera acelerada. Al final de la jornada, el trabajador experimenta una fatiga cognitiva profunda, que es cualitativamente distinta al cansancio físico. Esta fatiga reduce la capacidad de tomar decisiones complejas y aumenta la irritabilidad.

B. Alteraciones del Sueño y su Efecto Residual

Aunque el ruido cese al salir de la fábrica, el sistema nervioso queda en un estado de hiperexcitabilidad. Muchos trabajadores expuestos a ruido presentan dificultades para conciliar el sueño o sufren de un sueño fragmentado. La falta de sueño reparador crea un círculo vicioso: el trabajador llega a la mañana siguiente con menos recursos para enfrentar el estrés del ruido, potenciando los efectos negativos de manera exponencial.

C. El Síndrome de Irritabilidad Laboral

El ruido persistente deteriora el clima social. Se ha observado que en ambientes con ruido por sobre los niveles de confort (>65 dBA), los trabajadores tienden a ser menos colaborativos, muestran menos empatía y las discusiones escalan con

mayor facilidad. Esto afecta no solo la cohesión del equipo, sino la salud mental individual, pudiendo derivar en cuadros de ansiedad generalizada.

3. El Impacto en la Seguridad: Accidentabilidad y Errores

El ruido es un factor contribuyente en miles de accidentes laborales anuales que suelen atribuirse a "errores humanos" o "negligencia".

A. Enmascaramiento de Señales Críticas

Un ambiente ruidoso oculta sonidos esenciales para la supervivencia: el cambio en el ritmo de un motor que precede a una falla, la alarma de retroceso de un montacargas o el grito de advertencia de un compañero. Cuando el ruido de fondo compite con estas señales, el tiempo de reacción se triplica o, peor aún, la señal nunca es percibida.

B. El Paradox del Protector Auditivo

A veces, el uso de Elementos de Protección Auditiva (EPP) mal seleccionados agrava el problema de seguridad. Un protector que atenúa demasiado (sobrepotección) puede aislar al trabajador de su entorno, creando una sensación de desorientación espacial y dificultando la localización de fuentes sonoras, lo que es crítico en faenas dinámicas.

4. Calidad de Vida: Más allá de los Portones de la Empresa

La calidad de vida se define por la capacidad del individuo de disfrutar de sus esferas extralaborales.

El trabajador expuesto a ruido llega a su hogar con un "umbral de tolerancia" agotado. Esto genera:

- **Aislamiento Social:** El trabajador evita reuniones sociales o familiares porque su sistema auditivo y mental está saturado.
- **Problemas de Comunicación Familiar:** Debido a la fatiga y a la posible pérdida auditiva incipiente, la comunicación con hijos y pareja se vuelve tensa o inexistente.
- **Tinnitus Permanente:** La presencia de un pitido constante en los oídos, a menudo consecuencia de la exposición, es uno de los factores que más reduce la puntuación en los índices de calidad de vida, provocando incluso ideaciones depresivas en casos graves.

5. Desafíos para la Gestión en 2026

Para que la vigilancia epidemiológica en Chile sea efectiva, debe dejar de ser "otocéntrica". La gestión del ruido debe incluir:

1. **Evaluaciones de Riesgo Psicosocial:** Integrar el ruido como un factor de estrés en instrumentos como, por ejemplo, el Cuestionario de Ambiente Laboral y Salud Mental.
2. **Diseño de Espacios de Recuperación:** Implementar "zonas de silencio" efectivas donde el cuerpo pueda desactivar la respuesta de estrés.
3. **Capacitación Integral:** Informar al trabajador que el tapón auditivo no solo protege su audición, sino también su corazón y su salud mental.

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Building Occupational Hygiene Capability in New Zealand: A Decade of Growth

Lucre Pfefferman, NZOHS President-Elect, admin@nzohs.org.nz

Until just ten years ago, New Zealand had no formal pathway for Occupational Hygiene (OH) training. Recognising this critical gap, the New Zealand Occupational Hygiene Society (NZOHS) undertook a determined effort to establish structured, professional education.

2025 marked the 10th anniversary of NZOHS becoming an Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) Approved Training Provider on February 24, 2015. Since then, the Society has helped shape a sustainable framework for growing professional capability across New Zealand.

The journey began in October 2013, when NZOHS - with support from the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH) - delivered its first pilot course, W503 Noise - Measurement and Its Effects, under the AIOH ATP umbrella. This success demonstrated local demand and proved that a small volunteer-based society could deliver internationally accredited training in OH.

Momentum for change in New Zealand grew after the Pike River Mine disaster in 2010, which killed 29 miners and prompted a nationwide review of workplace health and safety systems. The Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety (2012-2013) concluded that improvements

were needed across multiple areas of occupational health and safety. The final report highlighted a clear OH gap in the market.

Based on these findings, NZOHS established three national development priorities for Occupational Hygiene:

1. Increase the number of competent, qualified occupational hygienists.
2. Expand technical and specialist capability.
3. Broaden general occupational health knowledge and attract people into the profession.

To address these priorities, NZOHS developed a comprehensive growth and funding plan. In 2018, the society secured 570,000 NZD of government support for the first three years, followed by 710,000 NZD for another three years, totalling six years of strategic development.

NZOHS acknowledges and thanks WorkSafe New Zealand for its

commitment to advancing workplace health and safety and for providing the financial support that enabled this six-year development programme. This funding established the foundation on which NZOHS has built lasting capability, broadened professional education opportunities, and strengthened the nation's OH community.

The government funding period enabled NZOHS to expand training delivery and invest in building capability. To meet growing demand and avoid volunteer burnout, NZOHS collaborated internationally, leveraging global expertise. Courses such as Ergonomics, Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), Thermal Stress, and Occupational Hygiene in Mining and Extractives were delivered in partnership with overseas instructors, ensuring greater access to specialised knowledge.

During this period, NZOHS established a model to deliver eight subsidised courses per year, making training accessible to small class sizes across the country.

NZOHS has reaffirmed its commitment to offering the OHTA pathway toward the International Certificate in Occupational Hygiene (ICertOHTA). This qualification supports students seeking international recognition - meeting educational requirements for the AIHACIH Exam and AIOH Full Membership and COH Exam.

This decision aligns with NZOHS's strategic goals: enhancing member capability, aligning with international certification standards, and providing a clear, professional career path in OH. Over the past ten years, NZOHS has achieved significant growth in capability, training delivery, and international collaboration, strengthening the availability and quality of OH education across New Zealand.

In 2024, NZOHS introduced Advanced Practice Short Courses (APSCs) to build on the foundation provided by the OHTA programme. Now in their second year, these advanced modules have been well received by New Zealand's OH community and represent the next step in professional capability building.

The success of the past ten years reflects the professionalism, dedication, and passion of NZOHS members and volunteers. The partnership with OHTA has allowed NZOHS to grow the profession from its infancy into a strong and connected community that continues to strengthen workplace health standards across the country.

NZOHS extends sincere thanks to OHTA for more than a decade of partnership and support. For more information about courses and training opportunities, visit:

➔ [OHTA Courses – New Zealand Occupational Hygiene Society](#)



First trial OHTA course delivered in New Zealand under AIOH ATP umbrella, in October 2013: OHTA503 Noise – Measurement and its effects.



Across the profession, many individuals are already doing important work to raise awareness of occupational hygiene and support others entering the field. Often these efforts happen quietly and independently, a practitioner mentoring someone new to the profession, a trainer developing learning materials, or someone introducing occupational hygiene concepts within a workplace or local community.

The Crossing Borders section of GEM aims to help amplify grassroots efforts from across the global occupational hygiene community. If you are involved in activities that help promote the profession, support learning, or open new pathways into occupational hygiene, no matter how small, we want to hear from you!

Not everyone has the time or confidence to write about their work, but these experiences are valuable to share. The aim of this section is to help bring these perspectives together, giving a voice to the many individuals contributing to the growth of occupational hygiene around the world.

Crossing Borders: Reflecting on the Evolution of Occupational Hygiene Education

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Over the past few years, many of us involved in occupational hygiene education have probably noticed how quickly the landscape of professional learning is changing. Advances in digital technology, combined with the global growth of the profession, are reshaping how knowledge is accessed and shared.

These developments bring clear advantages in accessibility and

flexibility. At the same time, they invite us to reflect on how we support learning, competence, and professional connection as the profession continues to evolve. Occupational hygiene sits at the intersection of science and practice.

While knowledge is essential, the way that knowledge is developed and applied is equally important. As learning models continue to evolve, it

may be useful for the profession to pause and consider how we balance accessibility, quality, and collaboration when developing the next generation of practitioners.

Expanding Access to Knowledge

One of the most positive developments in recent years has been the increased accessibility of occupational hygiene education. Online courses, webinars, and digital learning platforms have made it easier for professionals around the world to access specialist knowledge that may previously have required significant travel, time away from work, or considerable financial investment.

As digital education has grown, the profession has seen growing participation from individuals who may previously have struggled to access structured learning pathways. This increased reach is an important step in strengthening occupational hygiene capacity globally.

For practitioners working in regions where formal training opportunities may be limited, this accessibility can be particularly valuable. Flexible learning models also support professionals transitioning into occupational hygiene.

As digital education has grown, the profession has seen growing participation from individuals who may

previously have struggled to access structured learning pathways. This increased reach is an important step in strengthening occupational hygiene capacity globally.

The Digital Transition in Professional Education

Alongside the growth of online learning, many professional bodies and training providers are modernising the way courses and assessments are delivered. Electronic examinations, digital manuals, and paperless learning environments are becoming increasingly common.

These changes offer clear advantages. Digital resources can be updated quickly, materials can be accessed from almost anywhere, and administrative processes such as examination delivery can often be streamlined.

At the same time, they highlight that professionals approach learning in different ways. In many classrooms today it is common to see a mix of approaches, with some delegates accessing materials through laptops or tablets while others prefer printed manuals or handwritten notes.

For some learners this digital environment feels completely natural. For others, particularly those who may have studied in more traditional classroom settings, the shift toward electronic materials and computer-based assessments may take some adjustment. Recognising and

supporting these different experiences will remain an important part of ensuring learning environments remain inclusive and effective.

Teaching in a Virtual Environment

While much of the conversation around digital education focuses on how people learn, there is also an important conversation about how we teach.

Many experienced trainers who are highly effective in a classroom environment have had to adapt their approach when delivering training online. Teaching virtually can require different techniques to maintain engagement, encourage discussion, and gauge understanding.

In a physical classroom, trainers can read body language, move around the room, and respond to subtle cues from participants. Online environments often remove these signals. Silence on a virtual platform does not necessarily mean disengagement, but it can be harder to interpret.

As a result, trainers are increasingly experimenting with different approaches to keep learners involved. Interactive discussions, short exercises, visual demonstrations, and the use of questions to encourage participation are just some of the methods being explored. In some cases, teaching online may even require trainers to rethink elements of traditional teaching styles in order to create meaningful interaction through a screen.

Developing these skills is becoming an important part of modern professional education. Just as learners are adapting to new study environments, educators are also learning how to communicate complex ideas effectively within digital spaces.

An Evolving Training Landscape

As digital technologies make learning more accessible across geographic boundaries, the broader training landscape is also evolving. Professionals can now access courses from providers located far beyond their own region, and organisations are increasingly able to deliver training remotely.

This increased accessibility creates exciting opportunities for the profession. At the same time, it invites reflection on how the occupational hygiene community continues to support high standards of education and professional competence.

Professional bodies, training providers, employers, and practitioners all have a role to play in shaping this landscape. Maintaining strong training programmes and ensuring that learning remains practical, relevant, and engaging requires ongoing collaboration across the profession.

Rather than viewing these developments simply as change, they may represent an opportunity to strengthen knowledge sharing, build stronger professional networks, and create more diverse pathways into occupational hygiene.

The evolution of professional learning offers the occupational hygiene community an opportunity to reflect on how knowledge is shared and how competence is developed. Digital education has expanded access to training and created new possibilities for global collaboration. At the same time, maintaining strong professional standards requires continued attention to practical skills, mentorship, and professional connection.

Perhaps the question is not whether learning should be online or face-to-face, but how we continue to adapt our approaches to support both learners and educators in a changing environment.

As occupational hygiene continues to develop globally, conversations about how we learn and teach may become just as important as what we learn. By reflecting on these changes together,

we can continue building education pathways that are accessible, practical, and supportive for occupational hygienists wherever they are in the world.

Strengthening Global Worker Health Through Skills, Training, and Technical Support

Workplace health and safety professionals continue supporting global partners with annual sponsorships for training workshops and technical exposure assessments

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The Developing World Outreach Initiative (DWOI), a sub-committee of the American Industrial Hygiene Association Northern California section (AIHA-NCS) established a work group in 2006 to address the lack of adequate industrial hygiene resources for workers and workplace health and safety professionals in developing countries. The DWOI is composed of dedicated workplace health and safety professionals mostly based in northern California. The DWOI are continuing their nearly 20-year partnerships with multiple non-governmental organizations and universities in the developing world.

DWOI with support from the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN), funded 22 occupational health and safety projects in 2025 and will sponsor 20 projects in 2026. These include 17 training workshops and 3 technical exposure assessments. The workshops provide OHS training for trainers, workers and community members to help build local OHS capacity in developing countries. The technical projects focus on assessing and controlling workplace hazards across a range of worksites to better protect vulnerable worker populations in the developing world.

Each year, DWOI raises funds and solicits project proposals through a Request for Proposals issued in September, with submissions due by

November 1. The committee reviews all proposals—both training workshops and technical exposure assessments—and selects projects for funding by early December. Training workshop projects are funded up to \$750 USD, and technical projects up to \$3,000 USD.

DWOI / MHSSN Grants

Since 2020, DWOI and MHSSN have supported 28 technical projects and 79 training workshops worldwide. Each approved technical project is paired with a DWOI volunteer technical liaison, who provides technical guidance, helps coordinate donated equipment, and arranges pro bono laboratory analysis through an accredited industrial hygiene laboratory. Reports for all projects are posted on the [AIHA-NCS website](#).

Grants for Technical and Training Projects, 2020 to 2026 from the Developing World Outreach Initiative and Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network

Between 2020 and 2026, DWOI and MHSSN supported 28 technical projects and 79 training workshops across 18 countries, demonstrating a strong global footprint.

Activity was largely training-led, with countries such as India, Pakistan, and Mexico, Mozambique, Bangladesh and the Philippines

delivering the highest number of workshops, while India and Nepal also led in technical project work. Several countries were supported exclusively through training, reinforcing the focus on building local capability, while others benefited from a blend of both training and technical support.

Overall, the distribution reflects a balanced approach, prioritising skills development while delivering targeted technical interventions where needed.

DWOI has a long-standing relationship with the Asia Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV), which is an umbrella organization of grassroots workplace health and safety organizations in Asia. Several ANROEV members have received project funding from both DWOI and MHSSN during the 2020-2026 period. These include CEPHED in Nepal (8 technical projects), CIVIDEP in India (6 technical projects and 4 trainings), IOHSAD in the Philippines (1 technical project and 4 trainings) and LION in Indonesia (1 technical project and 3 training projects).

Examples of the impact of the projects can be found in ANROEV's May-June 2025 issue of "OSH Rights Newsletter," which featured reports on DWOI/MHSSN supported projects by CIVIDEP and CEPHED.

See <https://anroev.org/download/osh-rights-newsletter-issue-67/>

For 2026, DWOI and MHSSN will be funding the following projects.

DWOI & MHSSN Projects for 2026 Technical Exposure Assessment Projects

Organization	Abbreviation	Country	Topic
Network for Youth Development and Healthy Environment	NYDHEE	India	hazard assessment of ragpickers and scrap dealer women sanitation workers
Centro de Reflexion y Accion Labor / Center for Reflection and Labor Action	CEREAL	Mexico	hazard assessment of aging workers in auto and electronics sectors
Center for Public Health and Environmental Development	CEPHED	Nepal	hazard assessment of metal sculptor worker noise exposures

Training Workshops (18 total) - Workshops will be delivered in partnership with:

Organization	Abbreviation	Country	Topic
Safety and Rights Society	SRS	Bangladesh	OHS basics for 25 shipbreaking workers
Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers' Democratic Union	C. CAWDU	Cambodia	OHS basics for women garment workers
Equipo de Monitoreo Independiente de Honduras / Independent Monitoring Team of Honduras	EMIH	Honduras	OHS basics for union stewards in banana plantations
Jeevan Rekha Parishad	JRP	India	chemical hazards/OHS for women seafood/dye/chemical plant workers
Network for Youth Development and Healthy Environment	NYDHEE	India	OHS basics for 50 handloom weavers
Social Awareness and Voluntary Education	SAVE	India	life skills for women migrant workers far away from home
Centro de Reflexion y Accion Labor / Center for Reflection and Labor Action	CEREAL	Mexico	OHS basics for 25 mid-level managers in electronics sector
Comite Fronterizo de Obreros / Border Committee of Workers	CFO	Mexico	OHS basics for maquiladora workers
Center for Industrial Studies, Safety and Environment, Unit of the Eduardo Mondlane University	CEISA	Mozambique	OHS basics for university museum staff
Nepal Garment Workers Union	NGWU	Nepal	OHS basics for 50 women garment workers
Nigeria Labour Congress	NGWU	Nepal	OHS basics for 50 union staff and local representatives
HomeNet	n/a	Pakistan	OHS basics for 100 train the trainers

CROSSING BORDERS

Peace and Justice Network	PJN	Pakistan	OHS basics and worker rights for brick kiln workers
Women's Lawyers Council	n/a	Pakistan	OHS for 25-30 transgender workers in various sectors
Institute for Occupational Health and Safety Development	IOHSAD	Philippines	storytelling workshop for workers/ advocates to generate effective testimonies
Workers' Assistance Center	WAC	Philippines	OHS basics for 25-30 enterprise zone workers and organizers
University of Moratuwa	N/A	Sri Lanka	IH basics for university students

Technical and training projects were planned with CIVIDEP in India, but the projects were cancelled, due to the Indian government shutting down the NGO earlier this year.

Referrals to AIHA Microgrant Program

In addition to its own grants, DWOI / MHSSN has referred project proposals to the "Emerging Economy Microgrant" program of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) in the United States.

In the 2020-2025 period, referrals to the Microgrant program resulted in grants up to \$3,500 USD for four organizations in Bangladesh, two organizations in India, one organization in the Philippines and one in Sri Lanka.

The AIHA Microgrant program has an open submissions period, meaning proposals can be sent to AIHA at any time and the selection committee meets quarterly. More information on the Microgrants program is available at <https://www.aiha.org/get-involved/volunteer-groups/emerging-economy-micro-grants-program>

UC Berkeley Course Research Projects

Since 2018, the School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley has offered a graduate course on Global Occupational Health, focusing on workplace hazards in global supply chains. This course is organized with the assistance of DWOI and MHSSN members. A central requirement of the course is a major research project in which students investigate a workplace health and safety issue proposed by a worker organization in the developing world.

Throughout the semester, students work directly with their partner organization, and the final product is a report that can be used for public education, worker training, and advocacy. Research topics have included heat-related health effects, chemical exposures, ergonomics in manufacturing, and gender-based workplace issues including violence and harassment. More than a dozen research topics from worker and community organizations around the world have been explored by UC Berkeley students.

UC Berkeley is running the Global Occupational Health course again in spring 2026 and is soliciting future research topics. For more information on the course, contact Garrett Brown (garrettbrown2021@gmail.com)

COEH Internships

In 2025, UC Berkeley's Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) established a scholarship fund in honor of Professor Robert C. Spear. The fund supports graduate students in occupational health and safety to work as summer interns with worker organizations in the United States and internationally.

In its inaugural year, UC Berkeley students completed 10-week internships with ANROEV member organizations: CIVIDEP in India and IOHSAD in the Philippines. Both organizations also received grants from the AIHA Microgrant program to maximize the students' impact, enabling the development of publications, training materials, and advocacy papers based on the interns' work.

More information about the Dr. Robert Spear Intern Scholarships from UC Berkeley is [available here](#).

For information on future summer internships, please contact Garrett Brown.

Despite the financial cutbacks and exclusionary policies imposed by the Trump Administration in Washington, the work of the DWOI, MHSSN, and UC Berkeley continues. This collaboration with worker organizations and universities throughout the developing world now spans nearly 20 years and possibilities for cooperation and solidarity will continue into the future.

CROSSING BORDERS

The Pakistan Women Lawyers Council (PWLC), with support from National Legal Incubation Center and local bar councils, successfully conducted a two-day training workshop on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for Women Lawyers and Legal Professionals on June 20–21, 2025. This initiative aimed to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of women in the legal sector to identify, address, and advocate for OHS standards, and to empower them through a train-the-trainer model for wider dissemination within their networks and communities.



In February and March of 2025, Social Awareness and Voluntary Education (SAVE) successfully launched a comprehensive initiative to address the pressing health concerns of workers in the textile and garment industry in Tirupur District, Tamil Nadu, India. Over the course of these two months, 9 in-person training sessions on ergonomics were conducted in the communities, directly benefiting 358 workers; 80 men and 278 women, from various garment factories across the district. This training program was specifically designed to help workers tackle the widespread issue of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), which are often caused by the repetitive and physically demanding nature of their work. SAVE's initiative focused on practical ergonomics education, equipping workers with essential knowledge and skills to reduce physical strain, improve their health, and prevent injuries that are common in the garment sector.



Technical Project: Jeevanrekha Parishad (JRP) in collaboration with Centre for Occupational Health, KIIT University, India.

The JRP study and health camp project aimed to balance research and action by focusing on identifying occupational hazards in Odisha's textile industries, assessing workplace conditions, documenting worker health impacts, and evaluating safety protocols. The initiative also provided immediate medical assistance via health camps, increased awareness about preventive strategies and safe practices, generated evidence-based recommendations for industry stakeholders, and advocated for policy reforms that embed occupational health concerns in sector development efforts.



Global Engagement in Action: Strengthening Occupational Hygiene Through Leadership and Partnership

Matthew Olota, IOHA President, matthewolota@gmail.com

“As I step into the role of President of the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), 2025–2026 has been defined by purposeful global engagement. Across continents, IOHA’s presence at major professional forums has reinforced our strategic commitment to capacity building, professional leadership, partnership, and extending occupational hygiene protection to all workers – formal and informal alike.”



International Ergonomics Association (IEA)

During the Triennial Congress of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) held in Marrakesh, Morocco from April 28 to May 3, 2024, ICOH renewed its collaboration agreement with both ICOH and the International Ergonomics Association (IEA) and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA).

In progressing this agreement, IOHA has been working actively with the IEA on raising awareness on Ergonomics and Human Factors and other health risks in the Informal Work Sector.

The IEA Informal Work Technical Committee was inaugurated in 2023 and IOHA is actively represented on this committee by Matthew Olota (IOHA-President); the committee is currently focused on the following objectives:

- To support the development of HFE in the informal sector, particularly in low and middle-income countries

(LMICs), while acknowledging that the informal sector is also growing in higher income countries.

- Support the development of tools adapted to address MSDs in the informal sector
- Foster research collaboration between countries across the economic spectrum

On August 29, 2025, on behalf of IOHA, I participated in a high-level panel titled “Occupational Health of Informal and Migrant Workers” that brought critical focus to vulnerable worker populations. This was organized and hosted by the National Office of the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM), in collaboration with the Global Coalition for Informal Workers’ Health, Safety and Wellbeing (GCIW), and the International Ergonomics and Human Factors Association (IEA) Technical Committee on Informal Work (TC IW). My contribution was titled: “Closing the Gap: Occupational Health, Poverty and Decent Work of Informal Workers”, the following items were emphasized:

- The intersection between occupational exposure, poverty cycles, and informal employment
- The urgent need to extend occupational hygiene services beyond formal sectors
- The role of professional associations in advocating for equity and decent work
- Alignment with global frameworks on sustainable development and worker protection

The discussion reinforced that occupational hygiene must meaningfully engage with the realities of informal economies if it is to remain globally relevant.

IOHA remains committed to partnerships; we will continue to explore avenues to support and promote the work of IEA. We commend and appreciate the effort of the Technical Committee. Please stay tuned for more details on the first ever international conference on Informal Work in Nov. 2026. This conference is specifically devoted to OH issues in the informal work section, it will be hosted by the Universidad de Valle, Cali, Colombia. Please click on <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/gZQS2B3> to register your interest in the congress.

AIHA's Grand Challenges Project

Since December 2025, I have represented IOHA on the AIHA's Grand Challenges Project team. In 2019, AIHA's Fellows leadership team established AIHA's Grand Challenges for Worker Health, Safety, and Well-Being Leadership Team, a limited-term

volunteer group. In 2021, the Grand Challenges project began. As the world's premier organization for occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) professionals, AIHA, in collaboration with its allied organization partners, is ideally suited to embark on this important project. The time is right to build on the increased recognition of the value of the OEHS profession in protecting worker and community health and to further the association's progress towards its vision i.e. "a world where all workers and their communities are healthy and safe".

The identified grand challenges are: Mitigating the Impacts of a Changing Climate on Workers, The Changing Work Environment, Promoting Health Equity and Eliminating Precarity in the Workplace and Improving Exposure Assessment. IOHA is fully supportive of this initiative, and we are currently working with AIHA to expand reach to ensure these challenges are given the required focus globally by all our partners. For more on the Grand Challenges Project; please [click here](#).

Thank you AIHA for your great leadership!

AHRA Conference, Córdoba, Argentina

The 10th Pan-American Industrial Hygiene Conference was hosted in Córdoba, Argentina from Oct. 12 – 14, 2025. I had the privilege of representing IOHA at the conference and I delivered a virtual presentation at a plenary session. The presentation was titled 'Bridging Gaps, Building Capacity: Advancing Occupational Hygiene for All.' During the presentation, I explored the challenges

facing our profession and the impact on workers in the Pan-American region and globally. The need to urgently turn awareness into tangible strategic actions was emphasized. Key messages included: Expanding legislation to include informal workers, building workforce and OSH professional capacity, embedding occupational hygiene in national OSH strategies, fostering partnerships for resource sharing, collaborating with non-traditional partners (e.g., journalists, politicians, labor unions, etc.), and the need to continuously demonstrate value of occupational hygiene and worker protection through improved data collection and stewardship of trends.

Thank you and congratulations, AHRA, on the successful conference. An additional thank you for hosting such a well-organized and catered IOHA board meeting on October 25, 2025. The IOHA board members present were very well cared for and enjoyed the time with the special guests and thoughtful hosts while gathering at the beautiful local legislature in Cordoba.

IIHA Connect, Jakarta, Indonesia

At IIHA Connect, hosted by the Indonesian Industrial Hygiene Association (IIHA), I delivered a virtual presidential address focused on motivating occupational hygienists to align on strategies for addressing occupational hygiene challenges – reinforcing standards, strengthening competency, and increasing professional visibility. The work of IOHA in promoting global standards and exploring the power of partnerships was highlighted and the IIHA team was encouraged to explore similar opportunities locally.

Thank you IIHA for keeping the Occupational Hygiene conversation strong in your region.

OSHPro, Mombasa, Kenya

At the 8th Mombasa Annual Conference on OSH, I had the privilege of delivering a plenary session virtually; the theme of the conference was ‘Dealing with Exposure to Occupational Hazards’. In my presentation, I highlighted the occupational hygiene priorities in Africa with a strong focus on the vast economic landscape in Africa and the available young working population. The associated health risks facing the major industries, such as mining, agriculture, and the service industries were highlighted. The deficiencies in OSH capacity, especially occupational hygiene, were elaborated. A few common global approaches regarding improved regulatory framework, enhancing capacities at tertiary institutions, and leveraging partnerships with allied professionals, such as occupational health physicians, nurses, and ergonomists were discussed.

I closed the conversation by sharing the learnings and benefits of the recently launched Network of Occupational Hygienists in Africa; and made a strong call for the establishment of an Occupational Hygiene Society in Kenya.

Thank you OSHPro for keeping this annual conference going! It keeps getting better.

AIOH Conference, Sydney, Australia

I was honored to represent IOHA at the 2025 Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists Conference in

Sydney, a well-regarded event for its technical and social content. I connected with industry leaders from around the world and delivered a plenary presentation titled: “Reimagining Occupational Hygiene: Driving Evolution Through Standards, Science and Strategy.”

The session addressed a defining question for the profession: “How must occupational hygiene evolve to remain impactful in a rapidly changing world of work?”. The need to shift from data collection to effective implementation of controls was emphasized.

The plenary opened with data underscoring the magnitude of the occupational health challenge. Globally, an estimated 2.6 million workers die each year from work-related diseases, with a work-related death occurring approximately every two seconds. Occupational injury and disease account for roughly 6% of global GDP losses annually.

I also elaborated on the Occupational Hygiene Capacity Challenge. Drawing on discussions with leaders from national associations in Argentina, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the review examined five-year certification trends, professional growth rates, regulatory integration, and certified hygienists per million workers.

The findings revealed significant disparities across jurisdictions. While some countries demonstrate strong regulatory support and growth in certification pathways, others face

stagnation or decline in professional numbers. These differences highlight the need for deliberate strategies to increase service coverage and strengthen sustainable capacity. IOHA's commitment to capacity building, certification support, and professional development remains central to addressing these global imbalances.

The conversation also touched on informal employment and expanding reach and the need to embrace standards and regulatory stewardship. The role of partnerships and professional evolution was also highlighted: occupational hygiene operates within a broader ecosystem of worker health protection. Collaboration with occupational physicians, safety professionals, accreditation bodies, regulators, and international organizations enhances collective effectiveness. Engagement with global partners—including ILO, ICOH, INSHPO, OHTA, and related bodies—reinforces shared objectives and coordinated action.

Occupational hygiene remains central to sustainable work. Through coordinated global leadership, science-based standards, and deliberate capacity building, the profession can continue to evolve and expand its protective reach to all workers—formal and informal alike.

Thank you AIOH for another impactful conference.

Looking Ahead

Momentum continues to build.

I will be representing IOHA at the upcoming 2nd ICA International Symposium on Occupational Health and Safety in Maimi, Florida from Mar. 26 -27 and at the Global Occupational Safety and Health Conference (GOSH8) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from April 27 – 29, 2026. My focus at these events will be on accelerating the 'H' in HSE, finding strategic means of turning awareness into actions regarding worker health protection.

Professionals across regions are encouraged to engage, register, and participate actively in these events. These forums are not merely conferences – they are platforms for shaping the future of worker health protection.

Occupational hygiene must remain globally connected, locally responsive, and strategically aligned.

Through partnership, advocacy, and professional excellence, we move closer to a world where every worker – formal or informal – benefits from healthy and safe working conditions.

Samantha Connell Receives the IOHA Dedication Award!

The IOHA Executive Committee is pleased to announce that Samantha Connell is the recipient of the IOHA Dedication Award. Samantha served as 2024 IOHA Past President and as an Executive Committee member from 2023 to 2025, and continues her service as IOHA Board Director for the Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene.

Through her service to IOHA, Samantha has connected IOHA to and meaningfully engaged with other allied occupational health and hygiene organisations; opened up the global stage for IOHA; forged purposeful and productive partnerships; and advanced the profession of occupational hygiene.

She played a central role in establishing the landmark three-way memorandum of understanding between IOHA, ICOH, and IEA, a milestone that broadened the reach and collaborative foundations of all three organisations. As leader of the 2024 13th IOHA International Scientific Conference in Dublin, she brought together the global occupational hygiene community on an international stage, and her stewardship of the inaugural Emerging Leaders Institute opened new pathways for the next generation of practitioners.

Most recently, Samantha represented IOHA at the EXPO2025 Global Initiative on Safety, Health and Well-being Days in Osaka, Japan, further raising the profile of the profession on the world stage.

The award was presented to Samantha at the IOHA Executive Committee meeting on 10 March 2026, in a brief but beautiful ceremony. Those present and those who

sent their words from afar spoke of a leader who knows how to bring people together: someone who sits down, listens, and makes colleagues feel that the work truly matters. The themes that emerged were consistency, warmth, and trust.

“Samantha, you opened doors, championed IOHA and its members, and raised the global awareness of occupational hygiene.”

“Your energy, passion, and leadership is inspirational. It’s amazing how you can do it all [...] You totally deserve this award and recognition!”

“Samantha, it has been a joy and fun working with you. You inspire and encourage people to go the extra mile and achieve success.”

“I want to thank you for the finesse and aplomb, your understated demeanor that gives us confidence to proceed. It truly makes a difference.”

On behalf of the IOHA Executive Committee, Committees, Working Groups, and Board, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Samantha for her dedication, her service, and the lasting impression she has made on our organisation and on the global occupational hygiene community. It is a privilege to work alongside her.

Congratulations, Samantha!



MEMBER RECOGNITION



IOHA

Dedication Award

is presented to

Samantha Connell

as a member of the IOHA Executive Committee 2023 – 2025,
as IOHA President 2024,
as IOHA Board Director on behalf of the Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene (Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Arbeitshygiene – SGAH, Société Suisse d'Hygiène du Travail – SHT) January 2020 – present,
as a member of the IOHA Communications and Marketing Committee January 2020 – present,
as a member of the conference organizing committee for the 2024 13th IOHA International Scientific Conference 2023 – 2024
as co-organizer and co-facilitator of the inaugural IOHA Emerging Leadership Institute 2024, and
as member of the Executive Committee for the EXPO2025 Global Initiative on Safety, Health, and Well-being Days on behalf of IOHA 2023 to 2025,

to mark her dedication and contributions to the organization and the occupational hygiene community.

The Board of the International Occupational Hygiene Association recognizes her service and commitment.

Matthew Olota
Matthew Olota
President 2025-2026

10 March 2026

CLOSING NOTE & CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

As we close this edition of GEM, we want to thank everyone who contributed their time, expertise, and insight. Every article, update, and story in these pages reflects the generosity of a community that believes in sharing knowledge as a professional responsibility.

Looking ahead, our next issue will bring together five themes that span the physical, biological, psychosocial, and communicative dimensions of occupational hygiene – and we will be inviting contributions relating to:

- Occupational Hygiene Awareness
- Psychosocial Health (2026 ILO World Day for Safety and Health at Work theme)
- Respiratory Health & Air Quality at Work
- Biological Hazards in Healthcare Settings
- Bloodborne Pathogen Control

As a profession, we are increasingly confronted with the assessment and control of psychosocial hazards and risks. This next edition's alignment with the ILO World Day for Safety and Health at Work theme makes it an ideal moment to advance that conversation in GEM. We want to hear from the full spectrum of experience: specialists in psychosocial risk, occupational hygienists who have implemented assessment tools or controls in practice, organizations that have seen meaningful change, and anyone working at the intersection of work design, mental health, and occupational hygiene. Practical tools, success stories, lessons learned, and emerging frameworks are all welcome. If it helps us better understand and advance in this area, it belongs here.

Whether you are an experienced practitioner, a researcher, a national society, a student, or working in an overlapping field, your perspective has a place here.

You can submit:

- Technical articles
- Short thought pieces
- Case studies
- National society updates
- Student or early-career perspectives
- Tools, checklists, or practical guidance
- Partnership stories
- Global project updates
- Photos, quotes, or short reflections

If you're not sure whether your idea fits, get in touch. GEM is here to reflect the full breadth of work happening in and around occupational hygiene – and that includes emerging thinking, work in progress, and ideas still finding their shape.

We are also keen to feature emerging and not-yet-approved technologies, shared responsibly, to spark discussion and future thinking across the profession. Thought-provoking pieces that challenge assumptions or explore what may be coming next are very welcome.

Until next time – thank you for being part of this global conversation.