



AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATION

POSITION STATEMENT ON

BAN ON SPECIFIC HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

At the AIHA board of directors meeting in San Diego on January 23-24, 2016, the board was presented with a request from an AIHA Volunteer Technical Committee to support a “call for action” proposed by the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) regarding the issue “The Global Control of Lead Exposure to Eliminate Lead Poisoning”. This call to action recommended, as one of the many recommendations, to:

- Ban the manufacture, import, and export of lead-containing fuels, paints, plumbing fixtures, and plastics.

To better understand the complex issue of whether to support a ban on a specific product or hazard it helps to review a previous request to support a ban on a specific product. This issue first arose back in 2007:

In 2007, federal legislation was introduced that would prohibit the importing, manufacture, processing, or distributing of asbestos-containing products in the United States. Upon introduction of this legislation AIHA was asked by at least one volunteer group (committee) and several members to support this legislation because of the concerns surrounding exposure to asbestos, to both workers and others.

On the surface, this sounded like a reasonable request.

However, after further discussion the AIHA board came to the conclusion that it is not the proper role for an association such as AIHA to prohibit anyone from importing, manufacture, processing, or distributing of asbestos-containing products. The role of AIHA is to support the members of AIHA and the proper role for AIHA members in this instance is to “control exposure” to asbestos.

In its position on this issue, the board stated that:

The fundamental principle of the profession of industrial hygiene remains the anticipation, recognition, evaluation and control of hazards that impact workers and others. There are a range of control measures that industrial hygienists may recommend to protect people from hazards. Because of the health effects caused by exposure to asbestos, most AIHA members undoubtedly recommend to their employers/clients that if an alternative to asbestos can be used, it is in the best interest of worker safety to use the alternative. AIHA believes most AIHA members will continue to push for this alternative.

It is also obvious that the best means to ensure that workers are protected from a specific hazard is to eliminate the specific chemical or product that creates the hazard. . . . AIHA members remain concerned about and are actively working to limit exposure of workers and members of the community to the millions of pounds of asbestos already in place. AIHA continues to strongly support all efforts to ensure that new products and materials are not used which result in the release or potential release of asbestos fibers into the workplace or environment. Any application of asbestos in a product or material where the material becomes friable and subject to fiber release remains a significant concern and should not be continued.

Therefore, the real question is not whether legislation should be enacted to ban all uses of asbestos, but whether we can determine how to prevent new uses of asbestos from creating a hazard to individuals. The legislative recommendation for a ban is one best left to policymakers and regulators. The question of whether or not we can prevent the release of asbestos fibers during new uses of asbestos is one best left to the scientific community, hopefully through your legislative efforts for research and study of the hazards of exposure to asbestos.

POSITION STATEMENT:

The following position statement has been adopted:

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) will consider all requests to address the issue of whether or not AIHA should oppose the manufacture, sale, import, export, or use of any product. Such a request must include specific data and evidence as to why AIHA should oppose the specific product. Nevertheless, AIHA members are responsible to control exposure to a product or potential hazard. The purpose of AIHA is to support, protect and promote the membership of AIHA; not to become in the economics of any product. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, AIHA will not take a position to support a ban on the manufacture, sale, import, export or use of any product.

The board of directors was unanimous in its support of this position.

Adopted January 24, 2016