



October 15, 2014

The Honorable John Howard, M.D., M.P.H., J.D., LL.M.  
Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health  
CDC Washington Office-Patriot Plaza  
395 E Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Dr. Howard:

Recent news reports have confirmed what many have feared - the Ebola virus has now become active in the United States. With the first death of a patient in Texas and the ensuing confirmation of at least two healthcare workers testing positive for the virus, American workers are now expressing concern for their health and safety.

There is additional concern about the U.S. health care sector's readiness to provide adequate health protections as cases of Ebola begin to emerge. Of paramount concern to health care workers is the availability of enough personal protective equipment (PPE) in hospitals, which is crucial to avoid spread of the disease to workers. The Ebola crisis underscores the need of the health care community to re-emphasize PPE and other safety precautions.

As concern with Ebola continues to grow, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) urges NIOSH to engage other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and outside stakeholders in efforts to separate the misleading information from the science in how best to protect workers from this virus.

As an organization, AIHA's members and goals focus on preventing occupational illness and injury as a fundamental principle of the industrial hygiene field. AIHA also develops science-based public policy and practice through collaboration across scientific and technical communities, and works to ensure that safe and healthy environments are provided for all workers and communities. This makes our members uniquely qualified to protect worker health, as AIHA plays a unique role at the crossroads of manufacturers, practitioners, and the government.

Diseases like Ebola create public concern for the health and safety of healthcare workers and it is only a matter of time before this concern spreads to other workers. AIHA members have a unique skill set that is tremendously applicable to this emerging crisis. Industrial hygienists around the world are actively working to ask questions, seek solutions, and provide information to assure people with a good understanding of, and protection from, this disease. As the crisis evolves, AIHA believes that the role of industrial hygienists will become increasingly important as more and more workers become concerned. In addition, industrial hygienist involvement in the process will free clinicians of health and safety considerations so they can focus their attention on patient care.

AIHA appreciates our long-standing collaboration with NIOSH to help achieve the mutual goal of protecting American workers from workplace injuries and illnesses. AIHA offers its breadth of experience as a resource and we look forward to further opportunities to work with NIOSH on the Ebola crisis and similar issues.

If AIHA can be of any further assistance, please contact me. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter O'Neil". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "O".

Peter O'Neil  
AIHA Executive Director