

The Alphabet Soup: Finding Information for Chemical Safety and Compliance

Navigating the world of safety and health information is both confusing and frustrating...and what do those acronyms mean anyway? In this issue, we provide a brief summary of both governmental and private sector resources to assist you in your search. In later issues, we will discuss these organizations and their roles in more detail.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

OSHA was created in December 1970 by an act of Congress and signed into law by President Richard Nixon. OSHA's purpose is to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for workers by setting and enforcing workplace safety standards. These standards are rules that describe the methods that employers must use to protect their employees from hazards. The two main standards related to chemical safety are the Hazard Communication Standard and the Laboratory Standard. The Chemical Safety Office website (www.chemsafety.wisc.edu) has information on how these regulations directly affect university employees. Visit the OSHA web page at www.osha.gov.

Under Wisconsin statutes (101.055), the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (formerly Wisconsin Department of Commerce) adopts and enforces safety and health standards for *public employees*. What does this mean to public employees? Basically, we are under the same safety and health regulations as the private sector but that we have Department of Safety and Professional Services inspectors, not federal OSHA inspectors, who enforce the standards.

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):

NIOSH was created at the same time as OSHA. It is often called the research arm of OSHA and is responsible for conducting research, making recommendations for the prevention of work-related injury and illness and responding to requests for health hazard evaluations. While NIOSH provides valuable information (visit their web page at www.niosh.gov), their recommendations are not enforceable. NIOSH is best known for respirator certification and the *NIOSH Pocket Guide to Hazardous Chemicals*.

American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH):

The ACGIH convened in June 1938 as a membership organization for governmental industrial hygienists. Today, membership is open to all practitioners of industrial hygiene, occupational and environmental health whether private or public sector. *Threshold Limit Values for Chemical Substances and Physical Agents & Biological Exposure Indices* is their best known publication and serves as a guide for evaluation and control of workplace exposures to chemical substances, physical and biological agents. Currently, there are over 700 chemical substances

and 50 biological exposure indices referenced in this pocket guide. It is reviewed and updated annually. Visit their website at www.acgih.org.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

The EPA was created in 1970 by an Executive Order of President Nixon.

It was formed by moving many of the functions and personnel from the USDA, Department of Interior, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, as well as other agencies. The EPA regulates how the campus handles hazardous waste, asbestos and pesticides (to name a few areas). EPA regulations also require the campus to supply lists of hazardous chemicals stored, used or handled on campus to enhance emergency response efforts. Visit their web page at:

www.epa.gov

International Code Council (ICC):

ICC was created in 1994 as a non-profit, non-governmental membership association and is dedicated to building safety, fire prevention and energy efficiency. To achieve this, it has developed numerous codes through the collaboration with private and public sectors. These include the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Fire Code (IFC). Most cities, counties and states (including Wisconsin) have adopted the ICC building safety codes. View the ICC's website at www.iccsafe.org.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

The NFPA was formed in 1896 by a group of insurance representatives. It is a private sector, non-government organization. The NFPA establishes fire prevention and suppression, electrical and life safety codes and standards. The IFC codes (mentioned above), adopts many of the NFPA codes including requirements for the storage of flammable liquids and other hazardous chemicals. The color coded "fire diamond" seen on containers of hazardous materials was created by the NFPA 704. You can visit their website at www.nfpa.org.

American National Standards Institute (ANSI):

ANSI was formed in 1918. It is a private sector, non-profit organization that oversees the development of voluntary consensus standards for products, services, processes and systems. Membership is comprised of government agencies, companies and consumer groups, academic and international bodies. ANSI is widely recognized for eye, face, head and foot protection standards as well as safety showers and eyewashes standards. Their website can be found at www.ansi.org.

Underwriters Laboratory (UL):

UL was established in 1894 as an independent product safety certification organization. It is a private sector, non-government organization that develops standards and test procedures for products, materials, components and tools.

UL is a universally recognized symbol currently with 68 test and certification labs. Visit their website at www.ul.com.

U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB)

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The CSB conducts root cause investigations of chemical accidents – usually at industrial sites, though it has lately turned its attention to academic institutions. The agency does not issue fines or citations, but does make recommendations to facilities, regulatory agencies (such as OSHA and the EPA), industry organizations, and labor groups. The CSB website is www.csb.gov.

Compressed Gas Association (CGA):

CGA was organized in 1913 and is the oldest industrial and medical gas association. It is a private sector, non-government technical association focused on the development of industry standards and the pursuit of uniform regulations. CGA currently has over 300 standards and publications. Go to www.cganet.com to see their website.

American Chemical Society (ACS):

The ACS is a scientific society that supports scientific inquiry in the field of chemistry. Founded in 1876 at New York University, ACS currently has 161,000 members. Best known for the Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) which assigns a unique numerical identifier for every chemical described in open scientific literature. There are currently 56 million organic and inorganic chemicals with CAS numbers. Visit their website at www.acs.org.

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