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AIHA Urges Caution as DOL Ponders Workplace Toxin Rule Proposal

FAIRFAX, VA (July 25, 2008) — The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) today urged the Department of Labor to move cautiously in its attempt to push through a rule to regulate workers' on-the-job exposure to chemicals and toxins.

Recent news articles have indicated that the Department of Labor on July 7 submitted a draft rule to the Office of Management and Budget for review. While the text of the proposal has not been released, *The Washington Post* reported that the proposal “would call for a reexamination of the methods used to measure risks posed by workplace exposure to toxins.” The Labor Department reportedly did an outside study of the risk-assessment process back in September of 2007 at a cost of nearly \$350,000.

AIHA's concern stems from the fact that the proposal has not been made public, the Department of Labor did not disclose a possible rule in the regulatory agenda, and that important stakeholders and experts have not had the opportunity to review and comment. “On behalf of AIHA's 10,600 members, who work on the front line of worker health and safety on a daily basis, we urge the Labor Department and the Bush Administration to take a step back in rushing this proposal forward,” said AIHA President Lindsay Booher, CIH, CSP.

“AIHA has not seen the proposed rule or scientific basis and therefore can not comment on its content,” added Booher. “However, we are very concerned about the reports we have seen that the Department of Labor may be by-passing the public review process in what appears to be a far-reaching rule. Our members have wide ranging expertise in evaluating worker exposure from chemicals and other toxins. That is what we do!”, said Booher.

“AIHA strongly urges the Department of Labor to take the time needed to gather input from our members and other important stakeholders if they are moving forward with such an important effort. In fact, for several years we have urged the Department of Labor to streamline its approach

to update the OSHA Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) currently used to control exposures to toxic chemicals. Many of these date back to the 1970's and have not been kept current with new information about the risks they may pose to workers. Waiting until the proposal is announced and then allowing for a short 30-day public comment period will not suffice", Booher concluded.

Founded in 1939, the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) is the premier association of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals. AIHA's 10,600 members play a crucial role on the front line of worker health and safety every day. Members represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, government and academia. For more information, go to www.aiha.org.