



**BEST  
NEWS**

BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TARGETS

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OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE INTERNATIONAL



## United Nations Meeting on Tuberculosis

Occupational Knowledge International (OK International) has long spearheaded efforts to highlight opportunities to prevent Tuberculosis (TB) with silica dust controls in the workplace. Now we have taken our case to the United Nations as part of the preparatory process to plan for the first ever High-Level meeting on TB to be held at the General Assembly in September 2018. Perry Gottesfeld, Executive Director of OK International, helped organize a coalition from the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) to participate in the UN held interactive civil society hearing on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2018.



From left to right: Perry Gottesfeld, Marilyn Fingerhut, Gwen Brachman, Roberto Lucchini, Andrea Hiddinga, Rafael de la Hoz, David Zalk, and Ismail Nabeel

The hearing brought together various stakeholders including government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as individuals affected by TB. Several speakers spoke of the increased risk to miners and health workers. However, we were participating in order to emphasize that by reducing silica exposures in the workplace with simple dust control methods, we can significantly reduce the risk of TB among the most vulnerable.

This was the first UN sponsored meeting on TB where occupational health experts interacted with the global health community to highlight opportunities to prevent TB among

### Recent Publications

[Soil Contamination from Lead Batteries Manufacturing and Recycling in Seven African Countries](#)

[Blood Lead Levels among Children in Yaoundé Cameroon](#)

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workers in high-risk occupations, including health workers and silica-exposed workers, with occupational safety and health interventions. The need for such efforts is gaining recognition following the recent settlement of legal claims in South Africa where mining companies have for the first time acknowledged this link with TB by paying \$400 million dollars to compensate miners and ex-miners with TB in addition to silicosis.

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## **Goldman Prize Awarded to OK International's Partner for Lead Paint Elimination**

The 2018 Goldman Environmental Prize has been awarded to the EcoWaste Coalition, who lead efforts in the Philippines to convince the government to ban lead paint. The regulation from 2013 required companies to stop manufacturing and distributing lead paint for both residential and industrial applications.

As highlighted in our 2017 newsletter, OK International partnered with the EcoWaste Coalition to create and launch a program to certify paint without added lead. The Lead Safe Paint Certification relies on third party independent testing to verify lead levels in paint products. The Goldman Prize noted Calonzo's success in bringing paint companies into the certification program. In 2017, 85% of the paint market in the Philippines has been certified as lead safe.

## **U.S. Silica Standard Comes into Effect June 23, 2018**

The new U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) silica standard will be fully implemented on June 23, 2018 after many years of debate and extensive delays. Although the construction industry requirements came into effect last year, the regulation will now be extended to cover general industry and maritime exposures. The standard which requires employee education and engineering controls to lower airborne exposures, will force companies to adopt new practices to comply. The new Permissible Exposure Level (PEL) of 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup> is roughly 50% of the previous PEL for general industry, and 20% of the previous level for construction and shipyards, and may be the lowest occupational exposure limit in the world.

However, the OSHA standard does not change the regulated exposure limit for miners. It is not clear when the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration will follow through with a planned rulemaking process to update its separate silica standard.

The OSHA Standards are available here:  
[Construction Standard](#)  
[General Industry and Maritime Standard](#)

## **Hazardous Contamination Found Around Lead Battery Recycling Plants in Seven African Countries**

OK International, along with our African-based partners, published a study on "Soil Contamination from Lead Battery

Manufacturing and Recycling in Seven African Countries” in the February 2018 issue of the Journal of Environmental Research. OK International organized researchers from Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Tunisia, Cameroon, Kenya and Tanzania to test for environmental contamination around registered lead battery recycling plants in their countries. Few countries in Africa have adequate regulations governing these operations and emissions, but this is the first international effort to quantify the resulting contamination from lead battery recycling.



African lead battery recycling plant furnace

The results demonstrate that even large scale recycling facilities in Africa are significant sources of lead contamination. Lead levels inside plant sites tested had an average lead level of 57,700 parts per million (ppm) and samples taken from communities surrounding these facilities had an average level of 2,600 ppm. By contrast, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulates lead levels in residential properties at 400 ppm. Many of the plants tested were close to residential communities.

The excessive levels of lead contamination noted are a significant source of exposure to surrounding communities. The authors concluded that, “There is an immediate need to limit lead emissions from this industry and to test children’s exposure levels in nearby communities.” The article also calls for increased regulation of these plants and for funds to be set aside to pay for anticipated remediation following plant closures.

The full text of the article can be found [here](#).

## Study Finds Elevated Blood Lead Levels Among Children in Cameroon

OK International along with our Cameroonian partners at the Centre of Research and Education for Development (CREPD) published the first ever study to look at blood lead levels among children in Cameroon. The study was conducted on 147 children up to age 7 using the portable LeadCare II device. The study found that the mean blood lead level in children were six-fold higher than levels reported in the United States as well as five-fold higher than levels reported in France. The study also found a significant association between the age of a child’s home and the duration of exclusive breastfeeding, with their lead levels.

Known sources of lead in Cameroon, include lead paint, aluminum cookware and industrial emissions. The authors call for the Cameroon Government to impose regulations to

control sources of lead.

To follow up on the results of the study, the Ministry of Public Health in Cameroon held a workshop in January 2018 and invited OK International, our partners at CREPD, medical experts, and key government ministries. Over 50 participants attended the workshop. The main outcomes of the meeting were released in a report from the Ministry of Public Health which included recommendations that the country acquire the technology to test blood lead levels and conduct follow up studies.

The full text of the article can be found [here](#).

## **OK International Presents at International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) Meeting**

Perry Gottesfeld Executive Director of OK International spoke at the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) conference in Dublin Ireland in May 2018. The goal of the session organized by Gottesfeld and Marilyn Fingerhut, Vice President of ICOH was to plan the organization's response to the TB epidemic and to provide input into ongoing global TB efforts. Gottesfeld's remarks focused on the increased risk of TB among silica-exposed workers. Studies have shown that exposure to silica dust increases the risk of acquiring TB up to 4-fold.



From left: Sopia Kisting, Perry Gottesfeld, Marilyn Fingerhut, and Rodney Ehrlich

In addition, the ICOH Board also approved a statement on "Preventing Tuberculosis Among Silica Dust Exposed Workers" to summarize the scientific literature and highlight specific recommendations for governments, UN agencies, global health funders, and employers. The ICOH statement calls for a concerted global effort to promote Occupational Safety and Health strategies to prevent tuberculosis (TB) in high-risk occupations including silica dust exposed workers in mining, construction and other industries.

[Full ICOH Statement](#).

## **California Lead Paint Litigation Advances But May Face New Hurdle**

The ongoing 18-year legal battle continues in the State of California against former lead paint manufacturers to force



them to fund lead paint abatement in housing in the ten counties who participated in the litigation. In November 2017, the California Appellate Court denied the paint companies their appeal of a previous ruling requiring the companies to pay \$1.1 billion, but narrowed the decision to only require lead abatement in pre-1951 housing.

The defendants are now fighting this decision by proposing a ballot initiative in California to overturn the court's action. The companies have until June 28th to obtain the required number of signatures to put the measure on the ballot in November.

In addition to reversing the court's decision, the proposition would instead authorize a \$2 billion tax funded bond that would pay for the abatement of lead paint from homes and schools. The San Francisco Chronicle in a recent editorial called the proposed proposition "a cynical attempt to dodge corporate responsibility."

More information can be found [here](#).

## **WHO Publishes Report on the Health Effects of Lead Battery Recycling**

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a report on the health impacts of lead battery recycling. The study notes that informal sector recycling can't be done with adequate controls to make it environmentally sound. The WHO also acknowledges that even large, licensed lead recycling facilities can cause environmental contamination in countries around the world where there are inadequate standards or where standards are not enforced.

The report acknowledges that this hazardous industry is growing in response to the increased demand for lead batteries for motor vehicles, solar and wind power, and back-up power supplies. The report calls for national policies to manage used lead batteries that encompass standards for collection, recycling, emissions, and occupational safety. It also highlights the need for countries to develop adequate technical capacity, trained inspectors, and laboratory facilities for the measurement of lead in biological and environmental samples.

The full report as well as a summary can be found [here](#).

## **OK International Highlighted in Economist Article**

Perry Gottesfeld, Executive Director of OK International, was quoted in the February 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the Economist in an article titled "The Menace of Lead Poisoning" that highlighted the lack of restrictions on the use of lead paint in most countries. The article discusses the harmful legacy of lead paint in the United States as well as the growing use of these products internationally. The author notes that only a dozen countries have introduced lead paint bans since 2009 when the UN called for the elimination of lead in paint.

A link to the [full article](#).

## Brazil Becomes Latest Country to Ban Asbestos

In late November of 2017, Brazil's Supreme Court voted to ban asbestos. According to the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat this is an especially important development as Brazil is now the most populous country to ban asbestos. The court's decision will force the closure of asbestos mining and manufacturing plants. The impact of the ban may be felt beyond Brazil as the United States received 95% of its asbestos imports from that country in 2016.

Zuleica Nycz With the Brazilian NGO Toxisphera has been credited by many for this successful effort in Brazil. Zuleica's work on the asbestos ban was recognized with an award from Globo.

## Nigeria Conference on Lead Poisoning Prevention

Doctors Without Borders will sponsor a two-day conference on June 26-27, 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria on Lead Poisoning Prevention Associated with Artisanal Gold Mining in Nigeria. The focus of the conference being held in partnership with the Nigerian Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, is to call for a coordinated national program for lead poisoning prevention to involve all stakeholders. This is the second international conference on this topic since Doctors Without Borders first identified gold mining as the source of thousands of cases of childhood lead poisoning that has resulted in hundreds of deaths across northern Nigeria since 2010.

OK International is working in partnership with Doctors Without Borders in Nigeria to pilot safer mining practices in communities impacted by severe lead poisoning. We will present our findings highlighting the success of our interventions in reducing lead and silica dust exposures.

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