



**BEST NEWS**

BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TARGETS  
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OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE INTERNATIONAL



## OK International Partners with Doctors Without Borders to Introduce Safer Mining Practices in Nigeria

OK International is partnering with [Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#) to respond to widespread and severe lead poisoning from small-scale gold mining in



areas of northern Nigeria. In response to the hundreds of infant deaths from lead poisoning in this region, MSF has monitored and treated thousands of poisoned children since 2010.

OK International was initially involved in assessing the potential for lead poisoning from small-scale mining in Nigeria in 2012. Since that time MSF has recognized the limitations of their efforts to remediate lead contamination in impacted villages and provide medical treatment for the most severely poisoned children and was exploring opportunities to partner with OK International to introduce safer mining practices.

The goal of the current program that was launched last year is to work cooperatively to reduce exposures in mining communities where MSF completed the remediation of homes

## Recent Publications

[Metal exposures from aluminum cookware: An unrecognized public health risk in developing countries](#)

[The Lead Battery: A Growing Public Health Challenge](#)

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and is actively treating childhood lead poisoning. To date we have trained hundreds of miners to implement safer practices including wet mining/processing and personal hygiene practices, wet methods, and simple measures to avoid take-home exposures. In a pilot demonstration project, we have installed a bore well, wet ball mill, and spray mist systems to reduce the highest exposures seen in ore processing. We are also documenting these reductions in airborne lead and silica exposures.

[More about Safer Mining in Nigeria](#)



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## Cookware Made with Scrap Metal Contaminates Food

Aluminum cookware made from scrap metal in countries around the world poses a serious and previously unrecognized health risk to millions of people. In a study published earlier this year, Occupational Knowledge International and our partners at Ashland University tested 42 samples of aluminum cookware made in 10 developing countries and found that more than one-third pose a lead exposure hazard. The cookware also released significant levels of aluminum, arsenic and cadmium.



The highest levels were found in cookware from Vietnam including one pot that released 2,800 times more lead than California's Maximum Allowable Dose Level (MADL) of 0.5 micrograms per day. This cookware is common throughout Africa and Asia and is made from recycled scrap metal including auto and computer parts, cans and other industrial debris.

The study, "Metal exposures from aluminum cookware: An unrecognized public health risk in developing countries," was published in the February 2017 issue of the journal *Science of the Total Environment* and is available online [here](#).

Recently published surveys documenting lead exposures in Africa and Asia show that blood lead levels have remained

stubbornly elevated despite the ban on lead in gasoline in most of the world. “The presence of lead in food cooked in these pots may be one contributing factor to the ongoing lead poisoning epidemic,” said Perry Gottesfeld, executive director of Occupational Knowledge International.

“Lead and cadmium exposures from regular use of these pots will significantly reduce IQ and school performance among children, and contribute to millions of deaths due to cardiovascular disease,” according to Jeffrey Weidenhamer, Professor of Chemistry at Ashland University and lead author of the study.

## **OK International Presents at American Occupational Health Conference**

Perry Gottesfeld, Executive Director of OK International, spoke at the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine annual conference in Denver, Colorado in April. He addressed the International Committee lunch on “Opportunities to Reset Global Health Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The next day he presented a talk entitled “Are US Regulations Shifting Lead Exposures Abroad?” at a session on lead hazards. Other speakers at the session on “The Global Impact of Regulations, Trade, and Company Practices on Population Lead Exposures” included Paul Papanek, MD MPH, Michael Kosnett, MD MPH, Gerald Manley, RSR Corporation, and Jean Xiao, MD, MSC, MS.

## **AIHA Refuses to Endorse ISEE Call to Restrict Lead Uses**

In January the Board of Directors of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) has rejected a request from its membership to endorse a “Call for Action for Global Control of Lead Exposure to Eliminate Lead Poisoning” published by the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology and published in the journal *Epidemiology* (see [here](#)). This is the second time the AIHA refused to sign on to the ISEE Statement that focuses on specific actions that governments can take to put in place regulations and policies to begin to tackle the global lead poisoning epidemic.

The AIHA Board specifically objected to the ISEE call to ban lead in paint, fuel, plumbing fixtures, and plastics. This position fails to recognize the importance of implementing these basic measures in countries around the world. It also appears to stake a position against decades of Congressional action in the U.S. that has already restricted the use of many

of these lead-containing products. The UN has also taken a leadership role in efforts to first ban lead in fuel and later by voting to eliminate lead in all paints.

In most low and middle-income countries there is a lack of regulation to address even basic measures to restrict the use of lead in products. Very few countries even have a labeling requirement on products (including paints) indicating the lead content. The only practical approach to prevent lead poisoning is to place more restrictions on the use of lead.

Lead poisoning is a pervasive global health challenge that has been recognized for literally thousands of years, and continues to impact millions of lives. AIHA is doing a disservice to its members and reputation in failing to endorse and promote this consensus statement put out by ISEE and adopted by many other organizations. (See the list of endorsements [here](#).)

## **UNEA Resolution on Lead Battery Recycling**

The United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA2) held in May 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya endorsed a resolution recognizing the health and environmental impacts of lead-acid battery recycling. The resolution calls for UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to work to reduce lead releases, emissions and exposures, and to increase workers' safety and protection from this growing industry.

OK International initiated support for this resolution and helped launch the process by sponsoring a session on lead battery recycling at the United Nations International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Geneva in October 2015. This decision by UNEA was the first time that the UN formally called for global action to improve lead battery recycling.

To follow up on this resolution, UNEP held a meeting in December 2016 with African countries in the ECOWAS region on lead battery recycling. Perry Gottesfeld was invited to address the participants and outlined the need for additional regulation to improve lead battery recycling.

[More about Lead Battery Recycling](#)

## **EU Action on Lead Chromate Pigments**

After several delays, the European Commission granted a request by the Canadian pigment manufacturer Dominion

Colour Corporation (DCC) to allow the manufacture and sale of lead chromate pigments. The “authorization” allows for the uses of lead chromate pigments in paints for road markings and some other applications for up to seven years under the REACH regulations.

In response, the Government of Sweden with support from Denmark, Finland and the European Parliament has filed suit to reverse the authorization. The suit claims that suitable alternatives are readily available. The European Commission has thus far defended its position.

Earlier this year the European Commission REACH Committee also endorsed an authorization to allow for the use of lead chromate on ammunition used in naval applications.

## **Asbestos Roofing Article Removed from Web in Response to OK International Demand**

Last year the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene published an article titled “Airborne asbestos exposures associated with the installation and removal of roofing products” by Lotter et. al. The article falsely summarized the exposure data that it cites, included misleading information, and contradicted some of the key original research that it references. OK International, Right on Canada, and an independent group of scientists were successful in bringing these issues to the attention of the journal which later removed the article from its website and from online abstract services.

The article, published online in June 2016, claimed that for workers who installed and removed asbestos-containing roofing products, “the cumulative exposures associated with roofing work would be well below published chrysotile no-observed-adverse-effect-levels (NOAELs) for asbestos-related diseases.”

In a letter on July 22, 2016 to the JOEH, Perry Gottesfeld called for the article to be retracted; noting that the article misrepresented key studies cited and grouped together different exposures to conclude that the installation and removal of these roofing products are “not expected to release appreciable amounts of airborne asbestos fibers.” Gottesfeld was particularly concerned that the authors summarized data from projects involving asbestos-cement products with those that involved bituminous shingles.



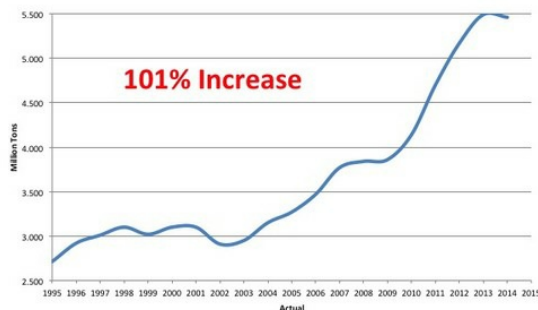
In a second letter, a group of scientists and health advocates called for the article to be retracted “because it is scientifically flawed; because it is contaminated by conflict of interest; and because its misinformation serves to cause harm to occupational and public health.”

[More about Asbestos Dangers](#)

## OK International Publishes Editorial in the American Journal of Public Health

The July issue of the American Journal of Public Health features an editorial by Perry Gottesfeld titled “The Lead Battery: A Growing Public Health Challenge.” The editorial points out that there is a popular misconception that lead is a legacy pollutant when in fact lead production is growing rapidly around the world primarily to supply the demand for lead batteries. However, environmental loss rates during the life cycle of a lead battery in low- and middle-income countries are estimated to be up to one third by weight. See the figure below showing the increase in lead production over the past 20 years.

### Global Mined Lead Production (1995-2014)



Source: U.S. Geological Survey "Lead 2015"  
<http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/lead/>

Lead battery recycling plants from Los Angeles to Mombasa, Kenya have come under scrutiny for their contribution to environmental contamination of soil and dust in communities surrounding these plants. But most countries still rely on antiquated standards or sometimes no standards at all and few resources are available for enforcement. The editorial points to specific areas where governments and major lead battery consumers can work constructively to improve these extremely hazardous industries. The full article appears [here](#).

[More about Lead Battery Challenges](#)

## Lead Safe Paint Certification Launched

The world's first paint certification program for paint products without added lead was launched in the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The IPEN third party certification program being implemented by SCS Global Services ensures that paints contain less than 90 parts per million lead. Occupational Knowledge International along with IPEN created and launched the program with funding from the European Union.

The program provides consumers the ability to select paints with the Lead Safe Paint Certification logo that are independently tested and verified. In the past many paint products purchased from paint stores in low and middle-income countries labeled as "lead free" and "no added lead" still contained significant concentrations of lead. Additional information can be found [here](#).

[More about Lead Paint](#)

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