Press Release

14 August 2018

German BAuA publishes new OEL for ATO and ATS, binding as of May 2018

The German Committee on Hazardous Substances (AGS) has reactivated its discussions relative to a new German OEL (or AGW, for *Arbeitsplatzgrenzwert*)–, for ATO and other Sb substances since the NTP inhalation studies draft results were published in early 2016.

In May 2018, the AGS supporting the German Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs', concluded on a new OEL for ATO and ATS. The German OEL is published on the German BAuA webpage, as part of the German TRGS 900 (Technical Rules for Hazardous Substances). The following OEL is applicable in Germany, to ATO and ATS, since June 2018:

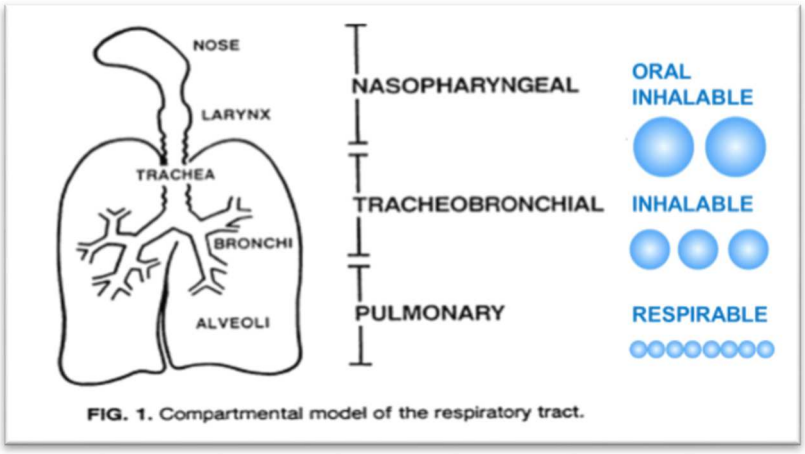

FIG. 1. Compartmental model of the respiratory tract.

0.006 mg ***respirable*** Sb/m³

This value differs from the OEL of 0.5 mg/m³ (in place in various jurisdictions) in that the current OEL is to be measured against inhalable sizes of Sb on the workplace, while the recent German value is to be measured against much smaller, respirable fractions, of Sb normally present on a workplace. The move towards a respirable OEL gives recognition to the condition that the adverse effects caused by Sb in the lung are most probably mediated by alveolar toxicity, whereby only respirable sizes can reach alveoli (cf. Fig. 1).

i2a's actions

i2a has been following the development of the rationale via two metals experts sitting in the relevant AGS working group on metals. Indeed, the AGS scientific work is typically not shared with the public until a final decision has been reached. Our comments and data have been considered but unfortunately, they were not taken forward by the AGS[1].

i2a's main concern relates to the approach followed by AGS to calculate the proposed OEL of 0.006 mg respirable/m³, which seems to determine a protection level for non-cancer effects[2] based on animal cancer levels, somehow combines rat and mice data in their modelling, and uses a number of assessment factors which do not seem fully clear and justified.

Now that the AGS assessment has been made publicly available, i2a will deploy a targeted communication and scientific outreach with the relevant authorities and experts, so as to obtain consideration of our argumentation. i2a's Exposure Monitoring Campaign starting in January 2019 should help in assessing the feasibility of this new OEL. Producers and users can help in populating all necessary evidence to inform the relevant authorities accordingly.

[1] When similar comments and data seem to have been considered by ACGIH in US…
[2] Since no Sb substance has been demonstrated to cause cancer in humans/workers.

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What should suppliers and users of ATO and ATS do?

For those established in Germany:

1. Make sure your monitoring equipment is foreseen to capture and measure Sb in the respirable fraction of your workplace air. This may mean replacing existing (static and) personal inhalable samplers by new respirable ones or adding new devices.
2. Start monitoring Sb in air with the respirable samplers[3], and ensure that you meet the new OEL of 0.006 mg/m³.
3. If you cannot meet the OEL, develop a plan/proposal[4] to implement the necessary technological and personal protection investments ASAP.

For those established outside Germany, they should communicate about the reduced OEL published within the TRGS 900 for ATO and ATS, and the three steps recommended above, to their customers in Germany.

Suppliers of ATO and ATS should whenever possible, recommend to their customers to use low-dust or dust-free forms of these substances (e.g. wetted powders, masterbatches, or sealed bags). In addition, as this German OEL may set a precedent for a future EU or international OEL, it is very important to support i2a with data and active participation in its Workplace Exposure Monitoring Campaign!

About i2a

The mission of the International Antimony Association is to inspire product stewardship along the antimony value chain. This mission is accomplished by generating and sharing information concerning the environmental and health safety and societal benefits of antimony and antimony compounds. Through a common evidence base, i2a promotes a harmonized risk management and continued safe use of antimony and antimony substances across the value chain and geographical borders.
For further information: www.antimony.com.

About WVMetalle

The WirtschaftsVereinigung Metalle (WVMetalle) with its 108,000 employees in 655 member companies represents the economic interests of the non-ferrous metal industry. We are committed to an industrial policy, which gives our branch the right (legal) framework for innovation and investment in order to remain competitive on a European and international level. The main focus of our work are energy and climate as well as environmental policies, but also regulations in the fields of R&D, European policy, trade and raw materials as well as taxes and finance. In 2017, the production amounted to 8.6 million tons and a turnover of 51.3 billion euros.

Acronyms

AGW: Arbeitsplatzgrenzwert (German binding OEL)
ATO: Antimony Trioxide
ATS: Antimony Trisulfide
BAuA: Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (German Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)
NTP: US National Toxicology Program
OEL: Occupationl Exposure Limit value

[3] This data will be generated as part of i2a's Monitoring Campaign starting in 2019. For more information, join the i2a Monitoring Task Force.
[4] More information can be found in the AGS' Orientation Guide on the creation and application of temporary transitional arrangements available from: https://www.baua.de/DE/Aufgaben/Geschaeftsfuehrung-von-Ausschuessen/AGS/pdf/Orientierungshilfe-Uebergangsregelungen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2

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