

Summary of colloquium

"Dust, smoke and mist at the workplace: risks and prevention" from 11th to 13th June 2001 in Toulouse (France)

The following is a summary of the colloquium drawn up by the two ISSA sections "Chemistry" and "Research":

In a number of industrial and manual processes, the formation of dusts, smoke and mist cannot be avoided. Thus, we have to focus on restricting exposure at the affected workplaces by means of technical, organisational and personal measures. Measures have to be taken to prevent potential health risks faced by workers exposed to dust, smoke or mist.

Exposure measurements or estimations in connection with limit values and available scientific and practical experience help determine potential risks.

On the basis of the papers and the discussions held at the International Colloquium among scientists and practitioners on the current situation with regard to the risks and prevention of the formation of dusts, smoke or mist at the workplace, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ❑ In the fields of industry in which sufficient knowledge of the exposure situation is available and where potential health risks cannot be ruled out, suitable and effective preventive measures have to be taken as a matter of priority. It is also of prime importance that information and intervention programmes are introduced in these fields.

- ❑ Working with dustlike bulk goods and the handling of such products, especially in the chemical industry, represents a special problem which has to be dealt with accordingly. It might be useful to devise process criteria.

- ❑ Risks caused by exposure to dusts, smoke or mist in small to medium-sized companies should be minimised by compounding available knowledge and implementing this knowledge in the form of preventive measures in these companies. It is inefficient for prevention to carry out individual measurements in the many small companies. Exemplary exposure measurements for certain working processes and technologies can help determine effective and economical approaches for prevention in this field.

- ❑ A valid set of criteria is still not available for the assessment of ultra-fine particles. Research is called upon to develop measuring techniques and limit values based on epidemiologically sound principles.

- ❑ For all our appreciation of scientific discussions of the question of correctly measuring dusts, smoke and mist, relevant measuring strategies and definitions, we should not forget our actual objective of preventing risks to life and health in the working environment. This is why methods of measuring and assessing exposure should ultimately be based on internal company conditions and the need for preventive measures in these companies.