

ISRP 2000 abstract

Presenter/author	Title	Abstract
Grantham, David Occ Health Unit, Div of Workplace Health & Safety Queensland, Australia	Hazardous Substances Legislation vs Respiratory Protection	Hazardous substances legislation following NOHSC's 1994 National Model Regulations has now been introduced to all states. This legislation generally places respiratory protective equipment (RPE) as a position of last resort in the so called hierarchy of control. Two surveys each of more than 80 users across Queensland industry conducted by the Division of Workplace Health and Safety on the use of respiratory protection review both the reliance on RPE and the competence of its use, both before and after the introduction Hazardous Substance regulation. The surveys used critical elements of the versions of AS/NZS 1715 which were in force at the time. The pattern of reliance on RPE as the major control for hazardous substances did not change with the introduction of legislation, indicating that users (>80%) still resorted to RPE as their principal control option. However, legislative awareness about control obligations rose to from an unlikely maximum of 27% to 39%, and management felt more confident in making decisions about use of RPE (70% and 82%). Major equipment defects were variously found at around 12%. Nonetheless, the capacity of users to select, use and maintain their RPE correctly in accordance with all the elements of AS/NZS 1715, and later the risk assessment requirements of legislation, remain constantly poor at 6% and 5% in the respective surveys. There are clearly pressing requirements for suppliers of RPE and the jurisdictional programs to conjointly act in the interests of their clients so that the RPE, as the <i>de facto</i> primary control strategy, does provide the risk management to the level mandated by modern legislation.