

Meeting date: 17 October 2003

Open Gov. Status: Fully Open

Exemptions: None

Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances

Notes of the 1st Open Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances held on 17 October in the Rose/Globe Room, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS

<p>Present Sandra Caldwell - Chair Ian Carney John Edwards Mike Kingsland Gwynne Lyons Ian Brown Len Levy Liz Corbett Colin Soutar Andy Stirling Alastair Hay Bud Hudspith Susan Murray Kim Sunley Apologies Roger Alesbury David Tolley Harry Wilson Elspeth Metcalfe</p>	<p>Officials Present John Thompson - Secretary Carole Sullivan Paul Oldershaw John Groves Christine Northage Colette Nimbley Peter Ridgway Michael Topping Julia Soave Nick Summers Peter Tanczos Naseem Walji</p>
<p>Public Attendees Present There were 38 attendees; Annex 1 provides a list of the organisations that were represented.</p>	
<p>Presenters Item 2 - John Thompson Item 3 - Mike Kingsland Item 4 - Bud Hudspith Item 5 - Liz Corbett</p>	

1	Welcome and introduction
1.1	Sandra Caldwell welcomed the 38 public attendees to the first ACTS open meeting. She explained that ACTS, like all HSC's advisory committees, holds open meetings as part of the government move to greater openness. The reason for the timing of the first meeting was also described, i.e. to coincide with European Week for Safety & Health 2003, which this year had the theme "dangerous substances". Delegates were told that the Committee had felt that for the first open meeting it was appropriate to explain the background to ACTS, what it does and what is on its agenda. It was explained that following the meeting the Committee would consider how it would hold open meetings in the future.
2	Role of ACTS: Remit, aim and current work plan
2.1	John Thompson presented this session (the PowerPoint slides available from ACTS Secretariat, e-mail: acts@hse.gsi.gov.uk). The presentation included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of HSC and HSE; • The role of HSC advisory committees; • A summary of ACTS' membership and sub-committee structure; and • Details of the ACTS work plan and how it links to HSC/E's Chemicals Strategy.
3	ACTS in action - case study: Development of a new OEL framework

3.1	<p>Mike Kingsland presented this session (slides available) in his capacity as a member of the ACTS OEL Framework Review Sub-group. He summarised the objectives of the session as to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Illustrate the ways that ACTS and its sub-committees work; and 2. Look at the detail of the proposed new OEL Framework (as published in CD 189). <p>He picked out two of his slides as being particularly important, the first of these summarised what OELs should achieve, and the second defined what would be meant by “adequate control” in the proposed new framework.</p>
3.2	<p>Points raised by attendees led to a discussion covering a range of issues including: linkage to the EU limit setting process; requirements to adequately control exposure to substances; and the need for measurement/monitoring of substances.</p>
4	European Week for Safety and Health 2003
4.1	<p>Bud Hudspith presented this agenda item (slides available). His presentation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to European Week 2003; • A summary of how and why ACTS had supported the week; • Details of the launch of Phase II of electronic-COSHH Essentials (http://www.coshh-essentials.org.uk) which includes 70 new control guidance sheets; and • Examples of the types of initiatives that had been going on during the Week, together with what would happen next.
4.2	<p>The Chair emphasised that if any delegates wanted to develop electronic-COSHH Essentials further, e.g. for their own sectors or industrial processes, then ACTS would be very keen to work in partnership with them. Following a question from a representative of the British Coating Federation, delegates were informed that a revised paper version of COSHH Essentials would be published in November 2003 (Note: This is now available as <i>COSHH essentials: easy steps to control chemicals</i>, ISBN 0717627373, Price £30, from HSE Books, tel: 01787 881165). As with the earlier paper version of COSHH Essentials, the paper copy will remain a simpler reference tool than the electronic version in which complex calculations take place behind the scene.</p>
5	Work plan spotlight: Occupational asthma
5.1	<p>Liz Corbett gave this presentation (slides available). HSC has recognised that it cannot solve the problem of occupational asthma on its own. Consequently it has set up a partnership board - the Asthma Project Board - to develop, publish and help implement an action plan on asthma. As well as being a member of ACTS, Liz Corbett is also a member of the Asthma Project Board.</p>
5.2	<p>Liz Corbett’s presentation covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facts about asthma and the targets for action and how this links to the ACTS work plan; • The asthma action plan and the stakeholders involved; • Recently published guidance material, e.g. http://www.hse.gov.uk/asthma/ and new COSHH Essentials control guidance sheets; • The work done on latex gloves as an example of what has been done and what has been achieved (http://www.hse.gov.uk/latex/).
6	Open Session: Audience comments and questions
6.1	<p>The Chair opened-up the meeting for questions and discussion on any topic relevant to the work of ACTS.</p>
6.2	<p>In light of the fact that 90% of companies now employ less than 10 people, the Federation of Small Businesses asked how ACTS represents the interests of small businesses. The organisation requested confirmation that the voice of small firms is taken into account by ACTS, not least because many such firms are not a member of any trade body. Bud Hudspith, Ian Carney and the Chair provided a response. A representative from the Composites Processing Association described the steps they are taking to ensure that even the smallest companies in their sector are provided with all the health and safety information they need. They provide free guidance to anyone associated with their</p>

	business, whether a member or not.
6.3	A question was raised about electronic-COSHH Essentials (e-CE), particularly with regards to the unique reference number that is generated whenever a user carries out an assessment. It was explained that HSE receive no information about who uses e-CE.
6.4	Genewatch UK referred to the horizon scanning (forward look) exercise that ACTS had recently carried out. The delegate asked what was the ACTS view on genetic testing. Alastair Hay, Kim Sunley, and Len Levy provided a response. The Chair summarised that the ACTS and HSE view was that this was not at present likely to be a fruitful or safe tool.
6.5	The British Occupational Hygiene Society raised a further question about measurement and monitoring in the workplace (see 3.2), particularly how it will fit in with the proposed new requirement to apply the principles of good control practice. Bud Hudspith, Len Levy, John Edwards and Mike Kingsland responded, the consensus being that monitoring would continue to have a role, e.g. to check controls are still working, but the matter would be considered again as the proposals for the new framework develop. The Kaolin and Ball Clay Association raised a supplementary question about MELs, OESs and measurement. The Chair summarised the matter by stating that this was an area where ACTS now takes the pragmatic approach that is now taken in enforcement, e.g. HSE inspectors look at what is being done in the work place in relation to control measures – only if they don't see good practice is there a request to see evidence that an OEL is being complied, e.g. measurement results. ACTS are attempting to take a similarly pragmatic approach. There will always be scenarios and substances for which measurement is required. Alastair Hay asked delegates to let ACTS know if they knew of better ways to reach small businesses in terms of control guidance, e.g. alternatives to e-CE.
6.6	The Chemical Industry Association representative then asked how ACTS sees its role developing for all the substances that will be covered by REACH, e.g. how will ACTS need to change and how many years will it take to develop all of the good practice guidance needed. The Chair informed delegates that it was too early to answer these questions as negotiations are still continuing in the EU. It was explained that ACTS members are involved, in different ways, in the consultation process.
7	Summary and close
7.1	The Chair thanked the public attendees for contributing to the success of the meeting by raising a wide range of interesting and relevant questions. Attendees were asked to complete the evaluation questionnaire that was included in their delegate packs. They were also reminded to visit the "Exhibition" (display panels and website demonstrations) in the nearby Fortune Room.

Organisations represented by public attendees at the 1st ACTS Open Meeting

ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED
Ask Consultants
Association of Occupational Health Nurse Practitioners (2)
British Aerosol Manufacturers' Association
British Association for Chemical Specialities
British Chemical Distributors & Traders Association Ltd
British Coatings Federation
British Compressed Gases Association
British Occupational Hygiene Society
Cast Metals Federation
Chemical Industries Association
Composites Processing Association Ltd
Confederation of British Industry
East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust
Eurisol (UK Mineral Wool Association)
Federation of Small Businesses (2)
GeneWatch UK
GMB Union
Independent Health & Safety Consultant
James Fisher Rumic Ltd
Kaolin and Ball Clay Association (2)
Occupational Health Review
Pfizer UK
Photo Imaging Council (3)
Quarry Products Association
Royal College of Nursing
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland
Royal Society of Chemistry
Silica and Moulding Sands Association
Solvent Industry Association
ToXcel International Ltd (2)
Toxicology Advice & Consulting Ltd
UK Cleaning Products Industry Association