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PLATINUM INDUSTRY PUBLISHES COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE SAFE USE OF PLATINUM GROUP METALS IN THE WORKPLACE

The International Platinum Group Metals Association (IPA), representing the world’s major producers and refiners of platinum group metals (PGMs)¹, today releases a new publication: ‘Safe Use of Platinum Group Metals in the Workplace’. Targeted at health professionals and those responsible for day-to-day operations in the industry, this guide will be valuable in advancing awareness of the hazards and risks associated with occupational exposure to PGMs, and how to effectively manage them to promote the health and safety of the workforce.

It includes: an updated review on the toxicology of platinum substances and other PGMs; revised workplace monitoring methodologies; a PGM sector consensus on health surveillance approaches; and coverage of optimal workplace control measures, including containment.

“This is a sector-wide consensus document promoting the safe handling of PGMs in the workplace” according to Gabriele Randlshofer, managing director of the IPA. “It represents just one part of a comprehensive and voluntary stewardship program which is underway in the PGM industry with the aim of protecting the health of employees who work with PGMs.”

The main health effect of concern for certain forms of platinum in industrial settings is respiratory sensitisation, commonly referred to as platinum salt sensitivity (PSS). It has almost exclusively been confined to workers exposed to certain compounds of platinum known as complex halogenated platinum salts (CHPS), of which chloroplatinates are the most common forms. Health care workers may also be exposed to allergenic platinum-containing anticancer drugs (platins). However, to date sensitisation reactions have not been reported in health care workers, but have been observed in patients infused with platins. Workers exposed to platinum forms other than chloroplatinates, or to other PGMs, have shown little or no evidence of respiratory sensitisation effects.

Most PGMs are integral to the workplaces in which they are used, and typically cannot be eliminated or readily substituted. The Guide therefore emphasises the proper control of soluble complex salts of platinum which are respiratory sensitisers by providing examples and suggestions for consideration in the design and implementation of occupational health and safety programs for worker protection.

The Guide ‘**Safe Use of Platinum Group Metals in the Workplace**’ can be accessed online following this link: www.ipa-news.com/workplaceguidance

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¹ The six PGMs are platinum, palladium, ruthenium, rhodium, iridium and osmium. They share, along with silver and gold, a generally high resistance to chemical attack and, as a result, are also called the ‘noble metals’. They also form a vast range of coordination compounds with some of the most complicated and diverse chemistry in the periodic table. PGMs are vital in the manufacture of many bulk and speciality chemicals and industrial products, in the control of vehicle exhaust pollution, and in the treatment of cancer and heart disease. However, over-exposure to certain PGM substances may cause adverse health effects, and it is important to understand and control the associated risks.

About IPA

The International Platinum Group Metals Association (IPA) is a non-profit association that represents the worldwide leading mining, production and fabrication companies in the global platinum group metals (PGMs) industry, comprising platinum, palladium, iridium, rhodium, osmium and ruthenium. The organisation, founded in 1987, is based in Munich and holds membership meetings twice a year. Its working committees and groups meet regularly throughout the year. The major aim of the organization is to act as a platform for discussion and information exchange between its members and with the outside world. Furthermore, the IPA serves as an early warning system for the PGM industry by monitoring legislation (emissions control, REACH, recycling etc.) and industry related topics such as trade, health & safety, and sustainable development.

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