The Occupational Alliance for Risk Science (OARS)
Jimmy L. Perkins, PhD, CIH
UT School of Public Health
May 23, 2012
OARS

• An *initiative* managed by TERA to:
• Facilitate sharing of information with workers and occupational health and safety professionals
• Provide a forum for information exchange about exposure guidance for chemical stressors, methods for improving occupational risk assessments, and training opportunities
• A home for exposure guide values, and related guideline documents, for chemical stressors
Why Develop OARS?

• Professionals in occupational risk assessment continue to see the value of setting occupational exposure limits (OELs) as a central tool for worker health protection. However, we need better processes to:
  – Eliminate duplication of efforts – too many chemicals and not enough resources
  – Ensure education and proper use of different sources of information driven by a complex regulatory environment (OELs versus DNELs versus hazard bands)
  – Provide mechanisms for technology transfer among risk assessment specialties to ensure best use of the current science

• These needs can be addressed through better collaboration though an alliance of interested parties
Occupational Alliance for Risk Science

Affiliates & Sponsors

TERA

Alliance Advisory Board

Risk Information Exchange (RiskIE)

Training
• Boot Camp
• Webinar Series
• Mentoring Program

TERA and NLM Web Posting

WEEL Exec

WEEL Committee

WEELs
• Full WEELs
• External WEEL
• Peer Review
AFFILIATES AND SPONSORS

• OARS encourages stakeholder engagement through:
  – Open and transparent processes
    • Invitation of stakeholders to attend science deliberations and provide data
  – Active outreach and communication
    • Information sharing via web posting, free on-line databases (RiskIE), and active outreach to affiliates
  – Opportunities for direct involvement
    • Sponsorship of OEL development for chemicals of interest to external parties
OARS ADVISORY BOARD

• Advisory Board Roles:
  – Statements on emerging risk methods to support harmonization and technology transfer
  – Communicate with leading entities in occupational risk assessment to share best practices
  – Support for the WEEL Committee
    • OEL request prioritization
    • Review or input on Administrative Operating Procedures (AOPs)
    • Provide guidance on COI issues
    • External stakeholder comment disposition
WEELs

- Workplace Environmental Exposure Levels™ (WEELs) are health-based guide values for chemical stressors. The WEELs provide air concentrations intended to protect most workers from adverse health effects related to occupational chemical exposures.
- WEELs have been derived by a committee of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) that has been active for over 35 years.
- WEELs for approximately 120 substances – focus on high priority chemicals lacking other published OELs.
CURRENT STATUS OF WEEL COMMITTEE

- August 2011: AIHA Board votes to discontinue WEELs
- October 2011: WEEL members pass unanimously proposal to establish an OEL advisory group managed by TERA
- January 2012: AIHA Board votes to transfer WEELs to TERA and OARS goes “live”
- February 2012: Existing AOPs adapted and ratified by WEEL members
- March 2012:
  - OARS Advisory Board Charter in development
  - Transfer and uploading of WEEL values on TERA website in progress
- June 2012: First OARS WEEL meeting planned
WEELs UNDER OARS

• Some changes for improved public health impact
  – WEEL values and their full documentation will be available with no charge on TERA website to increase access
  – New option for stakeholders to sponsor a WEEL and provide a data package to facilitate the process
  – New option providing independent review for submitted OELs to assist stakeholders ensure their internal OELs are sound

• Despite the changes - the high quality science and committee processes remain the same
MORE INFORMATION?

Contact Andrew Maier

maier@tera.org

513-542-7475 X16

See the OARS webpage

www.tera.org/oars