

Chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response: Perspectives from the ILO

IOMC Webinar, 28 April 2021

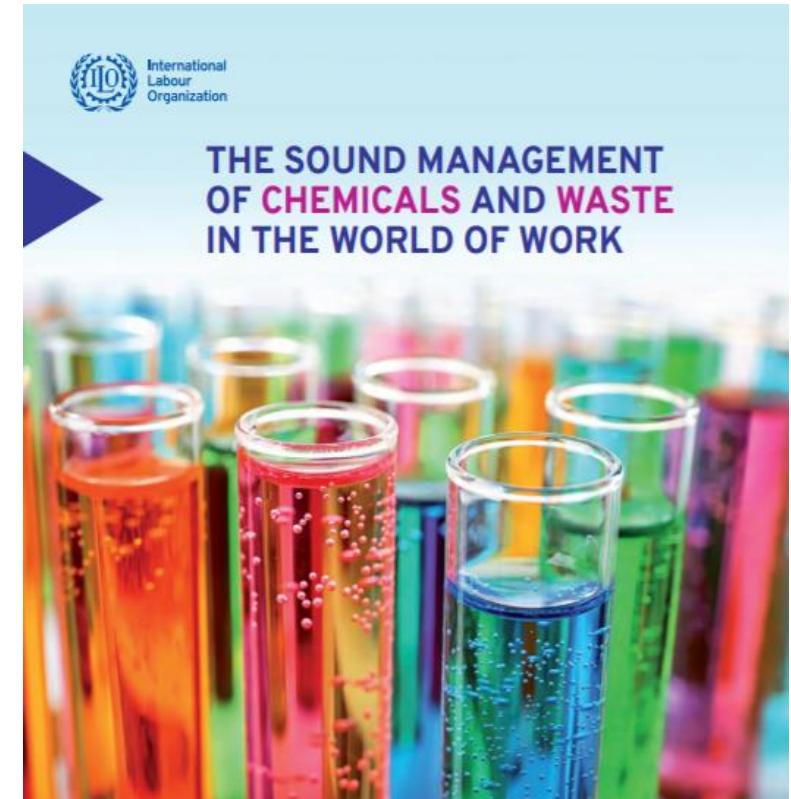
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ILO Chemicals Portfolio

- All-encompassing approach to chemical hazards and risks, across all sectors, life cycles and supply chains - **Action on chemicals is not stand alone**
- In the last 100 years, the ILO has adopted more than **50 legal instruments** on the protection of workers, but also the public and the environment, from chemical hazards
- Legally binding Conventions create a **strong preventative and protective foundation** in the area of chemicals and the world of work
- ILO offers many **technical assistance programmes** and provides training and guidance tools to **its tripartite constituents**



More info [here](#)

The need for Major Industrial Accident (MIA) prevention, preparedness and response

- Throughout the 20th century, **the world of work witnessed a series of preventable chemical accidents**, most of which share the inaccessibility of information as a common contributor to the ensuing tragedy
 - **1974:** Flixborough Disaster – Flixborough (UK)
 - **1976:** Seveso Chemical Plant Explosion – Meda (Italy)
 - **1984:** Bhopal Disaster - (India)
 - **1989:** Phillips Disaster - Texas (US)
- Moved ILO and its tripartite constituents to define **a legislative framework** for chemicals management and major industrial accident prevention



ILO Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174) and Recommendation, 1993 (No. 181)

Aim

- ▶ Prevent major industrial accidents
- ▶ Minimize the risks and the effects of major accidents

Definitions

- ▶ **Major hazard installation:** one which produces, processes, handles, uses, disposes of or stores, either permanently or temporarily, one or more hazardous substances or categories of substances in quantities which exceed the threshold quantity
- ▶ **Major accident:** a sudden occurrence - such as a major emission, fire or explosion - in the course of an activity within a major hazard installation, involving one or more hazardous substances and leading to a serious *danger to workers, the public or the environment*, whether immediate or delayed
- ▶ **Near miss:** any sudden event involving one or more hazardous substances which, but for mitigating effects, actions or systems, could have escalated to a major accident

C174 and R181

General principles

- ▶ Art. 4: Formulate, implement and periodically review a national policy on the protection of workers, the public and the environment from MIAs
- ▶ Art 5: Establish and regularly review and update a system for the identification of major hazards

Responsibilities of employers

- ▶ Art. 7: Identification
- ▶ Art. 8: Notification
- ▶ Art. 9: Arrangements at the Installation
- ▶ Art. 10, 11, and 12: Safety Report
- ▶ Arts. 13 and 14: Accident Reporting

Responsibilities of competent authorities

- ▶ Arts. 15 and 166: Off-site emergency preparedness
- ▶ Art. 17: Siting of Major hazard installations
- ▶ Arts. 18 and 19: labour inspection

Rights and duties of workers and their representatives

- ▶ Art. 20: Rights of workers, right to remove
- ▶ Art. 21: Duties of Workers, training and PPE

Responsibility of Exporting states

- ▶ Art. 22: Exporting state must inform importing state if prohibition is in place on chemical, process or technology as a potential source of MIA

Update on C174 and R181

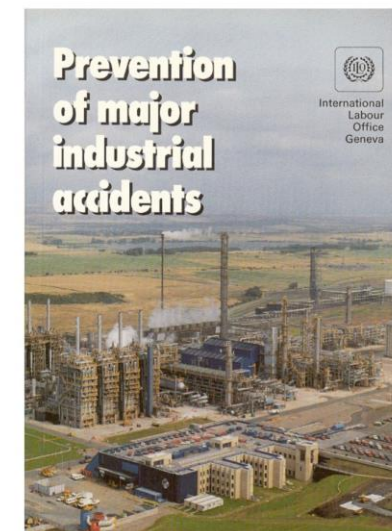
- Both instruments named as **Up-to-Date** by the ILO Standards Review Mechanism Technical Working Group in 2017
- ILO continually provides guidance and technical assistance to Member States in regards to various provisions and support for implementation
- **Ongoing ratification campaign** and global application of C174 and R181 – *application to national and workplace frameworks even in the absence of ratification*
- Update on field activities related to Major Industrial Accidents as well as stock-take on incidents

▶ Code of Practice: Major Industrial Accidents

Adopted in 1991 prior to the adoption of Convention No. 174 and Recommendation No. 181

Aims to provide guidance for setting up an administrative, legal and technical system for the control of major hazard installations

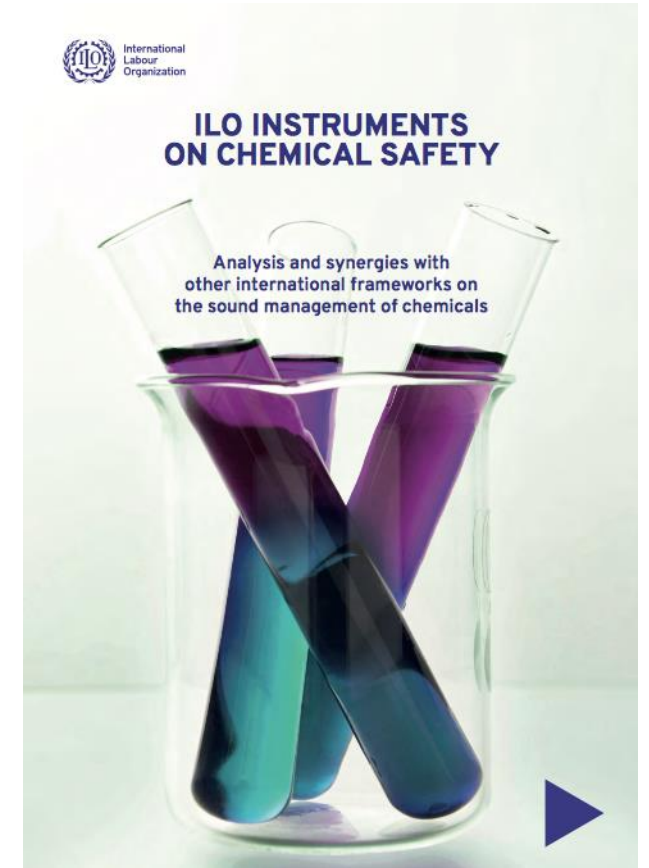
- ▶ protect workers, the public and the environment by **preventing major accidents from occurring** at these installations
- ▶ **minimizing the consequences** of a major accident either on- or off-site
- ▶ by proposing **an appropriate separation of major hazard installations** and housing as well as other nearby centres of population, such as hospitals, schools and shops
- ▶ provides **guidance on appropriate emergency planning.**



▶ ILO Instruments on Chemical Safety - Legal Review

Analysis of ILO Instruments on Chemicals and their synergies with SAICM

- ▶ Analyses **ILO instruments on chemicals and improving their application**
- ▶ Includes a section on instruments related to major industrial accidents
- ▶ Includes Convention 174, Recommendation 181, the Code of Practice
- ▶ Discusses the **promotion of this convention globally**



▶ COVID-19 and Major Industrial Accidents

The re-opening of businesses following lockdowns and quarantines brings new risks to the world of work, including MIAs

- ▶ Businesses re-opening without adequate safety provisions or preparations
- ▶ Increase in production of chemicals and personal protective equipment

A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic

- ▶ Social dialogue in return to work
- ▶ National OSH systems
- ▶ Coordinated action by government institutions
- ▶ Consider vulnerable workers and ensure policies are not discriminatory
- ▶ Effective, coordinated communication
- ▶ Thorough risk assessments
- ▶ Hierarchy of controls: elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls and PPE



**“Safe and healthy working
conditions are fundamental
to decent work.”**

ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019