

# BEST News

Better Environmental Sustainability Targets (BEST)

Published by Occupational Knowledge International



April 2015 - Volume 17

## Goldman Prize Awarded to Kenyan Activist Fighting Lead Battery Recycling Plant



Kenyan Goldman Prize winner Phyllis Omido meeting with Perry Gottesfeld in San Francisco.

April 20, 2015 San Francisco – The 2015 Goldman Prize is being awarded today to Phyllis Omido for her efforts in organizing her community to respond to an epidemic of lead poisoning from a lead battery recycling facility outside Mombasa, Kenya. Ms. Omido was an employee at the recycling plant when she first observed the symptoms of lead poisoning in her own son who was later tested and diagnosed.

She founded the Center of Justice, Governance, and Environmental Action (CJGEA) and led the campaign to bring attention to the contamination and resulting lead poisoning affecting her community. Although the plant was closed in 2014, the fight to address the remaining contamination continues. Due to the attention brought to this area as a result of her efforts, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is now working with authorities in Kenya on a full assessment of lead exposures the area.

### In This Issue

[Goldman Prize Awarded to Kenyan Activist Fighting Lead Battery Recycling Plant](#)

[Alarming Silica Exposures in Small-Scale Gold Mining](#)

[Securities and Exchange Commission Stops PPG Investors From Voting on Lead Paint Initiative](#)

[Nepal Becomes Latest Country to Ban Lead Paint](#)

[CEC Issues Draft Lead Battery Recycling Guideline](#)

[Exide Lead Battery Recycling Facility closure](#)

[International Epidemiology Society Issues Call to Eliminate Lead Poisoning](#)

[EU Ban on Lead Chromate Pigments Hits Road Block](#)

[U.S. Lead Exports to Developing Countries Increased in 2014](#)

## OK International Reports Alarming Silica Exposures in Small-Scale Gold Mining

Small-scale gold miners in Tanzania are being exposed to alarmingly high levels of respirable silica dust according to a study being published this month. OK International conducted the study in July 2014 with help from a volunteer industrial hygienist Jeff Dalhoff, along with another industrial hygienist based in Tanzania, Damian Andrew.

Air samples taken during underground drilling operations had an average respirable silica exposure of 16.85 mg/m<sup>3</sup>



Miner operating a ball mill grinder in Tanzania.



or 337 times greater than the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommended exposure limit (REL). Above ground operations averaged approximately 4 times the REL.

The highest silica exposures measured underground raise concern that workers may be at risk of developing an accelerated form of silicosis that may occur within a few years of working in this environment. In addition, all of the exposures measured are at levels known to increase the risk for chronic silicosis and are known to significantly contribute to the risk of tuberculosis (TB) among miners.

Other hazards noted during our field investigation include the use of mercury, high noise levels from machinery, the manual lifting of heavy loads, and safety hazards particularly around the mining pits.

The article "Silica Exposures in Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining in Tanzania and Implications for Tuberculosis Prevention" was published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene. (see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25897484>)

For recent news and updates, follow OK International on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/occupknowledge>

OK International would like to thank our program funders including:

International Finance Corporation

Deshpande Foundation

Energy Foundation

Environ Foundation

Goldman Fund

Mailman Foundation

Sigrid Rausing Trust

United Nations Environment Program

Conservation, Food & Health Foundation

## Securities and Exchange Commission Stops PPG Investors From Voting on Lead Paint Initiative

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission ruled in February that a shareholder proposal calling for a vote on the company's use of lead additives in paint at the second largest paint company in the world, PPG, interferes with "ordinary business operations" and therefore does not have to go to a proxy vote. In a February ruling the SEC sided with the company who petitioned the agency to stop the vote.

The PPG shareholders who brought this action were seeking a vote to require the company to issue a report on options for eliminating the use of lead in their paint and coating products in order to protect workers and consumers. Although the company has reformulated their architectural paints after pressure from OK International and our NGO partners CREPD in Cameroon, they have not agreed to stop the use of lead compounds in their other product lines. AkzoNobel, the world's largest paint company, announced that they stopped using lead additives in all their products in 2012.

**Please help support OK International by making a tax-deductible donation on our web site.**  
<http://www.okinternational.org>

## Nepal Becomes Latest Country to Ban Lead Paint

Following a three year effort on the part of OK International, IPEN, and our partner NGOs in Nepal including the Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED) and the Society for Legal and Environmental Analysis and Development Research (LEADERS), the Government of Nepal announced that they would ban the use of lead in paints. The regulation which takes effect in June 2015, limits the concentration of lead in both decorative and industrial paints to 90 ppm.

**Los Angeles regulator lowers ambient air lead standard for lead battery recycling plants by 25% in 2016 and by 50% in 2017 to 0.100 µg/m3 making it the lowest level in the U.S.**

## NAFTA CEC Commission Issues Draft Lead Battery Recycling Guideline

Following up on our report "Exporting Hazards" that we conducted along with our Mexican partners Fronteras Comunes in 2011, the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC) has issued a draft NAFTA guideline for lead battery recycling plants.

(CEC) working under the NAFTA framework has released a draft "best practice" guideline for lead battery recycling in North America. The draft guidance document was widely criticized at a meeting sponsored by the CEC in Mexico City late last year for failing to differentiate between current recycling operations and "best practices".

In comments provided to the CEC, OK International pointed out that the draft document fails to provide any guidance for disclosing environmental emissions or any other performance criteria. The draft guideline does not include any industry-specific performance requirements for companies to benchmark their operations for any of the key indicators including stack emissions, ambient air concentrations, water emissions, employee exposures, employee blood lead levels, or other operational parameters. We are encouraging the CEC to improve the document before releasing a final version.

## **Exide Lead Battery Recycling Facility Closure**

The Los Angeles area lead battery recycling facility owned by Exide has been permanently closed following violations of lead air emissions. Regulators have reached agreement with the company requiring it to set aside at least \$47 million dollars to clean up the site and to remediate contaminated soil around homes in the area.

## **International Epidemiology Society Issues Call to Eliminate Lead Poisoning**

The International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) issued a statement calling for concerted global effort to eliminate lead poisoning. The statement calls on governments to ban lead containing paints, fuels, plastics and plumbing fixtures and to increase emission reduction efforts with more stringent regulation.

The organization has members in over 60 countries. A copy of the full statement will be published in the journal Epidemiology.

## **EU Ban on Lead Chromate Pigments Hits Road Block**

The European Union had announced a ban on lead chromate pigments used to produce lead paints under the REACH regulation. Although European paint companies and industry associations expressed support for the ban, the Canadian based company Dominion Colour Corporation filed an exemption petition. Under the REACH regulations a company can petition the regulators for an exemption known as an "authorization" to allow the continued use of the product.

The company's competitors, including BASF responded in saying that acceptable and safer alternatives are readily available. However, Dominion has so far succeeded in persuading the European Chemicals Agency's Committee on Socio-Economic Analysis and Committee

on Risk Assessment to authorize the continued use of these lead pigments for 12 years, unless the full European Commission reverses this decision.

Dominion is the world's largest producer of lead pigments used in paints, plastics, and inks. In 2013 Canada exported more than 49 million kilograms of lead chromate pigments. Last year OK International and a number of our colleagues wrote to Dominion asking the company to commit to ending the production of these pigments. No positive response has been received to date.

**U.S. exports waste lead batteries for recycling to more than 15 low and middle-income countries despite restrictions on such exports under the Basel Convention.**

## U.S. Lead Exports to Developing Countries Increased in 2014

U.S. exports of lead scrap and used lead batteries for recycling increased by 40 percent from 2012 to 2014. These exports are destined to go to smelters in countries with far weaker regulations governing environmental emissions and occupational exposures. The largest increase was in scrap and used lead batteries going to India for processing. Other countries with significant increases of imported lead scrap from the U.S. include Ecuador, Dominican Republic and Korea.

Used lead battery exports to the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Indonesia and Japan also increased significantly in 2014. According to Commerce Department data, the U.S. exports used lead batteries to more than 15 low and middle-income countries despite restrictions on such exports under the Basel Convention. The U.S. has never ratified this convention on the export of hazardous waste.

Continuing an ongoing trend, U.S. exports of lead ore for smelting abroad increased by 70 percent from 2013 to 2014. As in the past, China was the biggest importer of lead ore accounting for over 70% of U.S. exports. Exports of lead ore to Mexico also experienced a significant increase in 2014.

Occupational Knowledge International

[www.okinternational.org](http://www.okinternational.org)

Email us at: [info@okinternational.org](mailto:info@okinternational.org)

Human Rights • Environmental Protection • Public Health

---

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Occupational Knowledge International  
4444 Geary Blvd  
Suite 300  
San Francisco, California 94118  
USA

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

**vertical** DELIVERED  
**response** BY  
Try It Free Today!