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New study finds crucial gaps and lack of transparency in occupational safety and health sustainability reporting

DES PLAINES, IL—A study released today by the Center for Safety and Health Sustainability (CSHS) revealed troublesome gaps and a lack of transparency in occupational safety and health (OSH) sustainability reporting among organizations rated highly for sustainability performance. The study, “Current Practices in Occupational Health and Safety Sustainability Reporting,” also raised concerns about ranking methodology, as some corporations reported more than 10 work-related fatalities in a year – with one organization reporting 49 in the same period.

After analyzing public data on OSH reporting practices from each organization listed on the Corporate Knights’ 2011 *Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World*, the study revealed that the majority of the corporations did not include metrics recommended by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), one of the most comprehensive sustainability reporting frameworks available. Nor did the majority include metrics recognized as important by CSHS and the international OSH professional community.

The study further concluded that even when relevant information is reported, corporate OSH performance is difficult to interpret, compare and analyze due to a lack of uniformity in data collection and clarity over reporting methods and metrics.

“Our research showed, for example, that the companies surveyed used six different formulas to calculate injury rate overall and at least 15 different methods were used to define ‘a report-worthy injury or incident,’” CSHS Chair Tom Cecich said today.

“The objectives of sustainability reporting are not achieved simply by disclosing information. The information disclosed must also be *meaningful*. Current OSH sustainability reporting practices make it difficult for stakeholders and investors to understand and evaluate the extent of an organization’s commitment to OSH management,” said Cecich. “It also makes it difficult for an organization to improve awareness of its own performance, better understand necessary improvements, compare itself to competitors and gauge performance improvement over time.”

CSHS recommends that GRI and other sustainability reporting frameworks better promote the importance of OSH as a major indicator of an organization’s overall sustainability and adopt OSH performance indicators that meet the following criteria:

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- Well-defined and standardized terms and definitions that allow for accurately evaluating an organization's performance across different sectors and geographies.
- Standardized data collection methodology that allows stakeholders to easily compare safety performance across and among organizations.
- The reporting of leading indicators, allowing stakeholders insight into whether corporations are taking meaningful actions to improve OSH performance.
- Information reported over multiple years (e.g., 5 years historical information) enabling internal and external stakeholders to gauge improvement and compare performance to other organizations over time.
- An extended scope of coverage that includes OSH reporting for contingent workers (including temporary contract and subcontractor workers) as well as workers in the Supply Chain – growing and highly vulnerable segments of the global workforce frequently left out of OSH reports.

“It’s hard to believe that organizations can report double-digit fatalities and still be on a list of the 100 most sustainable companies,” said United Kingdom-based CSHS Director Steve Granger. “Clearly, the methodology for rating sustainability performance must be overhauled.”

The **Center for Safety and Health Sustainability (CSHS)**, established in 2010, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the safety and health sustainability of the global workplace. CSHS engages safety and health partners around the world to work toward establishing minimum standards that help reduce workplace injuries and ill health. A collaborative effort founded by the American Industrial Hygiene Association, the American Society of Safety Engineers, and the Institution for Occupational Safety and Health, CSHS represents over 85,000 workplace safety and health professionals worldwide. For a copy of the report please go to <http://www.centershhs.org/>.

Founded in 1939, the **American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)** is the premier association of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals. AIHA’s 10,000 members play a crucial role on the front line of worker health and safety every day. Members represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, government and academia.

The **American Society of Safety Engineers**, founded in 1911, is the oldest professional safety society. With more than 35,000 members in 80 countries, ASSE is dedicated to the advancement of its members and the profession through education and advocacy. ASSE’s professional members lead, manage, supervise, research and consult on safety, health, transportation and environmental issues across industry, government and academia.

Based in the UK, the **Institution of Occupational Safety and Health** is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals, with more than 42,000 members in 85 countries. We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We’re a leading voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people. IOSH was founded in 1945 and is a registered charity with international NGO status.

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