



**Governing Council
Sixty-sixth Session**

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**BIENNIAL REPORT OF
THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (OHSC), 2022–2023**

1. The IARC Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) consists of ten members who represent each floor of the IARC building premises, the Staff Association Committee (SAC), the Administrative Services Office (ASO), the Laboratory Safety Officer and the Staff Physician. The OHSC was restructured in 2023 to adapt its composition to the new IARC building.
2. Since September 2022, Dr Berth Ntanga Atik is a member of the OHSC in her capacity as IARC Staff Physician. In 2023, Mrs Nathalie Lamandé (representative of the 4th floor), Mr Sylvain Lubiato (ASO representative) and Dr Lynnette Fernandez Cuesta (Staff Association Committee representative) have joined the committee.
3. The OHSC is grateful to the following members who left the committee during 2022/2023 for their invaluable contribution to occupational health and safety at IARC over the past years:

Mrs Christine Carreira, Mrs Priscilia Chopard, Mrs Sandrine Chopin, Mr Thomas Cler, Mrs Nathalie Forey, Mrs Elisabeth Françon, Mrs Aurélie Salle and Dr Lamia Tallaa.
4. The OHSC met seven times during 2022–2023. The minutes of each meeting are made available on the intranet to the attention of IARC personnel.

General well-being

5. Employers in France are required to assess the health and safety risks to which employees may be exposed, and to record them in a dedicated document, which also contains measures to mitigate those risks, and which is updated on a regular basis. As an international organization, IARC is not required to prepare such a *Document Unique d'évaluation des risques professionnels (DUERP)*, but the move to the new IARC premises was considered a good opportunity to develop this useful risk assessment document.
6. The Director provided the necessary funds to hire an external company to guide IARC in this exercise, and the OHSC was tasked to lead the preparation of the document. The committee reviewed multiple offers and selected the most suited company for the project. The preparation of the DUERP involved multiple virtual meetings with the company, which led up to a site visit, during which all activities were discussed in detail between the external company and IARC staff. Based on this discussion, the DUERP was prepared by the external company and the OHSC. It lists all risks associated with the building and specific activities, scores them by severity, and calculates the residual risks according to the mitigating actions already in place.

7. Additionally, this document helps formalize an action plan to reduce residual risks that can be mitigated. Based on the information captured in the document, the OHSC will work closely with ASO and the IARC Director to implement certain measures for risk reduction. The DUERP is a « living document », which, guided by the OHSC, will be updated on a yearly basis.
8. The OHSC was in regular communication with the IARC Director regarding the urgent need for reinstating a functioning and efficient security and safety system for IARC staff following the move to the new premises. The Committee relayed the concerns of the personnel and provided suggestions for the implementation of such a system. Personnel safety at IARC is mostly provided by the IARC Security Team, a small group of IARC staff with advanced First Aid training. However, the Security Team is present at IARC until 17:00, whereas official working hours extend until 18:30, with punctual longer stays (due to laboratory experiments, for example). One of the main concerns was the lack of a security/safety system after 17:00, and the topic and possible solutions were extensively discussed with the Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) and the Director.
9. The chosen solution was the implementation of a Fire and Safety Warden system, which involved an official First Aid training (Sauveteur Secouriste du Travail (SST)-1) for 60 IARC staff on a volunteer basis. The Committee acknowledges the decision to establish the Fire and Safety Warden system, however, its preferred option was the inclusion of the security guards in the official IARC Security Team (and to cover personnel safety and security after 17:00), as had been the case on the former IARC premises.
10. The OHSC was part of a working group dedicated to “Living and working in the Nouveau Centre”. The work focused on the preparation of general procedures to be applied in the new IARC building, as well as an update of dedicated laboratory procedures. Part of this work built the foundation of the General Safety and Security Guidelines for the new IARC building, while the laboratory procedures part will help the Laboratory safety officer drafting a brand-new laboratory manual.
11. Related to the move of the Agency to its new premises, the OHSC was in regular contacts with DAF, Human Resources (HR), and the Director’s office to help create the best possible working environment in a challenging situation. This included the decision of the Administration to turn off the heating in the old IARC building at the beginning of March 2022 and to not restart it during the preparation for and completion of the move in the fall. The situation created unease among staff who could not telework. It was eventually possible to partially relieve the situation by installing space heaters in certain locations.
12. Another concern after the move to the new premises was related to the air quality in an unfinished building (in conjunction with new contracting and protocols for housekeeping/cleaning), which caused health problems for some staff. Following extensive air quality tests arranged by ASO and the DAF office, some of the concerns were confirmed and measures were taken to improve the situation.
13. Lastly, the Agency did not have a cafeteria with food services since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected morale and significantly reduced social interactions. The OHSC repeatedly communicated this to the Director, and members of the committee were actively involved in the restoration of the IARC Cafeteria services, which restarted in March 2024.

Laboratories

14. Concerns regarding the lack of a general communication system in the new IARC building were raised by the Committee. This was not considered to impact work in offices, which are all equipped with computers and virtual communication tools (Microsoft Teams or Zoom for instance). However, many laboratories are not equipped with computers, or the existing equipment is not compatible with Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This raised a considerable safety concern for work in laboratories and various options were discussed to mitigate the risk.
15. Together with IT services, the DAF office and the Director's office, the implementation of a softphone solution based on Microsoft Teams was chosen as the best option. In 2023, the OHSC tested different softphone options with the help of IT services, and the selected phones, which are programmed with a speed dial option for reaching the IARC Security Team, have been installed throughout the year.
16. During the past Biennium, the guidelines for laboratory activities during pregnancy were revisited. The Laboratory Safety Officer worked closely with the interim Staff Physician (from WHO Headquarters) to review and update the existing procedures. As the first months of the pregnancy are the riskiest period, a consultation with the Staff Physician needs to be arranged as early as possible. This does not mean that laboratory work must be completely avoided, but some activities might have to be stopped while others can be adapted. The new procedures include an extensive consultation of the concerned staff member with the Staff Physician, who will, if necessary, consult with the Laboratory Safety Officer to assess the existing risks and their mitigation.
17. An incident related to the unforeseen failure of a laboratory alarm system spurred the development and implementation of guidelines and a standard operating procedure for work with certain chemicals. An important function of the building's HVAC system is the removal of air from special biosafety cabinets with air extraction that are used for work with certain, volatile chemicals and with viruses. The control system reporting failures of the air extraction was not fully operational after the move to the new building. This resulted in the exposure of an IARC staff member to chemical fumes during a routine experiment. Fortunately, the exposure duration was short and related to a chemical with limited risk. The staff member was immediately referred to the IARC Staff Physician and did not show or develop any adverse exposure symptoms.
18. The OHSC, together with the Laboratory Steering Committee and ASO, closely assessed the procedures for working with volatile chemicals, and a standard operating procedure, based on real-time monitoring of air extraction for work with hazardous chemicals, was prepared and implemented.
19. A workshop dedicated to the "Handling of Chemicals" was organized for laboratory workers. It was delivered by experts from the *Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité (INRS)*, and it included a theoretical part, which was followed by laboratory visits and dedicated discussion sessions of the INRS experts with laboratory personnel.

Incidents and accidents

20. This item concerns accidents and identification of potentially hazardous situations for IARC personnel during the biennium. Two different types of work accidents were reported during the last biennium:

- Lab accidents (1)
- Commuting accident (4)

The circumstances of each accident were evaluated, and rectifications were made, when appropriate, to prevent associated risks of recurrence.