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Occupational carcinogens

Assessing the environmental burden of disease at national and local levels

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Preface

The disease burden of a population, and how that burden is distributed across different subpopulations (e.g. infants, women), are important pieces of information for defining strategies to improve population health. For policy-makers, disease burden estimates provide an indication of the health gains that could be achieved by targeted action against specific risk factors. The measures also allow policy-makers to prioritize actions and direct them to the population groups at highest risk. To help provide a reliable source of information for policy-makers, WHO recently analysed 26 risk factors worldwide, including occupational carcinogens, in the *World Health Report* (WHO, 2002).

The Environmental Burden of Disease (EBD) series continues this effort to generate reliable information, by presenting methods for assessing the burden of disease from occupational exposure to carcinogens at national and local levels. The methods in the series use the general framework for global assessments described in the *World Health Report* (WHO, 2002). The introductory volume in the series outlines the general method (Prüss-Üstün et al., 2003), while subsequent guides address specific environmental risk factors. The guides on specific risk factors are organized similarly, first outlining the evidence linking the risk factor to health, and then describing a method for estimating the health impact of that risk factor on the population. All the guides take a practical, step-by-step approach and use numerical examples. The methods described in the guides can be adapted both to local and national levels, and can be tailored to suit data availability. The EBD series of guides aim to provide rational information that can help to design protective measures for reducing workplace risks.

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Abbreviations

AF	Attributable fraction (equivalent to the IF, or impact fraction).
CAREX	International information system on occupational exposure to carcinogens.
CRA	Comparative risk assessment.
DALY	Disability-adjusted life year.
EBD	Environmental burden of disease.
IF	Impact fraction.