

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH BRANCH

# Occupational Health Watch: June 2019

### Anesthetic Gas: A Risk for Veterinary Workers

There is increasing evidence that exposure to isoflurane, the anesthetic gas commonly used in veterinary practice, may pose health risks, including nervous or reproductive system harm.

A new Workplace Hazard Update, *Isoflurane May Harm Veterinary Worker Health* (PDF), details how staff are exposed. It also provides guidance for minimizing exposure.

A California Department of Public Health investigation found high levels of isoflurane in workers' breathing zones during common veterinary procedures. Staff at veterinary practices were often unaware of the dangers of isoflurane, Cal/OSHA requirements, and ways they can protect themselves from the hazard.



#### Did you know?

Cal/OSHA has set a legal limit on the maximum level of isoflurane that can be in the air workers breathe. This Permissible Exposure Limit, or PEL, for isoflurane is 2 parts per million (ppm). CDPH found that many veterinarians, clinic owners, and workers were unaware of this regulation.

*Photo: Veterinary staff may be unaware that anesthetic gas is getting in the air they breathe.*

### Resources

[Isoflurane May Harm Veterinary Worker Health \(PDF\) - OHB workplace hazard update](#)

[Recommendations on Control of Waste Anesthetic Gases in the Workplace \(PDF\) – American College of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia](#)

[Guidelines for Workplace Exposures to Anesthetic Gases – OSHA](#)

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Email Occupational Health Watch ([OHW@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:OHW@cdph.ca.gov)) with feedback or change of address.

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