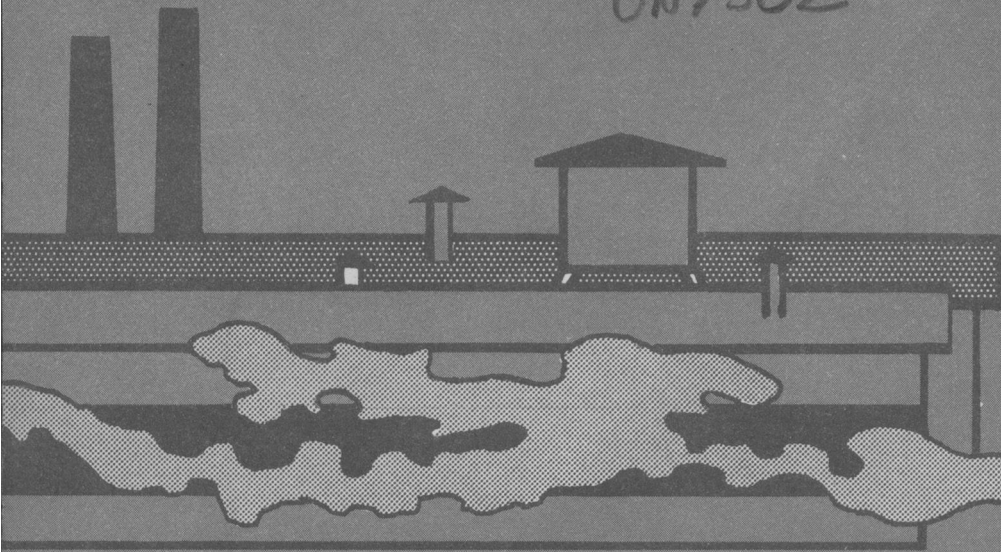


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Safe Air in workrooms

"No substance is so toxic
that it cannot be used . . .

no substance is so nontoxic
that it should be used

without caution."

see page ii

Threshold Limits

Notable progress in the establishment of reliable threshold limits, or maximum allowable concentrations, for injurious agents in the workroom air has been made largely during the past decade.

The chaotic situation that existed prior to that time is reflected in the early reports of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. Organized in 1937, this group was one of the first to concern itself with the development of workable, uniform toxicity guides for the provision of a healthful working environment.

In 1942, the Subcommittee on Threshold Limits of the Committee on Technical Standards presented as its first report to the conference a table of the maximum allowable concentrations established by various States for atmospheric contaminants. Values for more than 60 substances were given. Some of these substances were listed as many as three times, reflecting the different values set by the States. The concentration for nitrogen oxides, for example, was 29-70 p.p.m. in 1 State, 40 p.p.m. in 4 States, and 10 p.p.m. in 7 States.

Such variations were based in large part on very limited experience. Gradually, the accumulation of toxicological data and information based on clinical studies of exposed workers, environmental investigations, and animal experimentation has provided a firmer, broader base for the establishment of maximum allowable concentrations.

The 1954 threshold limits list of the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists presents single values for over 160 different substances. In addition, there is an accompanying tentative list of values under trial and test. Henceforth the tentative list will include all substances not previously listed.

For a review of threshold limits and other limits and tests for safeguarding the health and comfort of the industrial worker, see the paper by Dr. Herbert E. Stokinger on page 1 of this issue.

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