



**Season’s greetings Pittsburgh Local Section of AIHA! I hope everyone is enjoying the holidays!**

Due to scheduling and attendance issues, we had to postpone our planned events in September and November; however, both events have been rescheduled for January and February. Further, registration is currently open for “The Shocking, Sordid, and Sometimes Tawdry History of Exposure Sampling Strategies” to be presented by Paul Hewett Ph.D. CIH FIOH of Exposure Assessment Solutions, Inc. on January 11<sup>th</sup> at AM Health & Safety, Inc.

In addition, final details are being worked out for the AIHA President’s Luncheon at the LeMont on Thursday, March 21. Our President-Elect Barry Momyer, CIH and his organization AM Health & Safety, Inc. have volunteered to sponsor up to ten students from our student sections to attend the event. On behalf of the chapter, we greatly appreciate your generosity Barry and team! A special thank you is also in order for Matt Zock, CIH for coordinating this event once again.

Speaking of students, we encourage all student section members to apply to the Pittsburgh AIHA Scholarship by February 5<sup>th</sup>. Visit the AIHF Scholarships page here for more information and to apply: <https://www.aiha.org/get-involved/aih-foundation/aih-foundation-scholarships>.

Although I was unable to attend the MASHA 2023 Safety and Health Conference, the section was well represented as 25 members were in attendance. In the spirit of collaboration with like-minded organizations, several members of the Executive Committee were able to connect with the Executive Committee of the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) Western Pennsylvania Chapter about future joint events, which may happen as early as this spring.

Finally, I would like to thank Christy Kirsch, Barry Momyer, Darrick Bertig, Rona Smeak, Frank Pokrywka, Carol Delfino, Tim Beck, Matt Zock, Barb Cummings, and Morgan Ryan for participating in the Winter Business Meeting at Smokey Bones on December 13, 2023. I would like to encourage all our membership to try to attend these events in the future. If you are interested in taking a more active role in the direction of the chapter, please let Tim Beck or Christy Kirsch know as we are currently looking for candidates to run for President-Elect, Director, or Treasurer during our 2024 Election Cycle. If you are not ready to commit to an Executive Position, there are several committees that could use your help. These committees are a great opportunity to learn about our local section.

As always, we are actively looking for presenters and topics. If you are interested or know someone who is interested in presenting to the section, please let us know. Similarly, please let us know if you would be interested or know someone who would be interested in presenting to the student sections at IUP, SRU, and/or WVU.

Best Wishes,  
**Dane Mitcheson, CIH, CSP, CHST**

## Next Event – January 11, 2024: "The Shocking, Sordid, and Sometimes Tawdry History of Exposure Sampling Strategies"



**Register NOW!** Please plan to join the Pittsburgh AIHA as we welcome [Paul Hewett, CIH, PhD \(Exposure Assessment Solutions, Inc.\)](#) for a presentation titled "*The Shocking, Sordid, and Sometimes Tawdry History of Exposure Sampling Strategies*". **Details and online registration can be found here: NEXT MEETING.** Deadline to register is **Monday, January 8, 2024.** Space is limited to 25 for this event, so register early!

The event will be held at the offices of AM Health & Safety, Inc. located at 5177 Campbells Run Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15205. Thank you to Barry Momyer / AM Health & Safety for providing the venue for this event.

## Pittsburgh eLearning Subscription Renewed for 2024



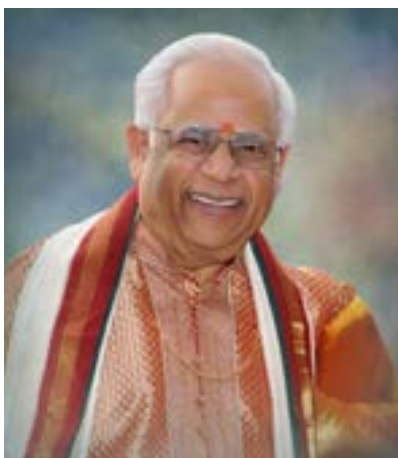
The Pgh. AIHA Executive Committee voted to renew the local section eLearning subscription for 2024. Course selections will be made in the coming weeks and details posted. **Remember that this is a benefit for PAID Pgh. AIHA members only.** Be sure to renew your Pittsburgh AIHA local section membership or you can subscribe on the [membership page](#).

2023 course selections expire on 12/31/2023.

## Student Members - AIHce 2024 Conference REMINDERS

1. The 2024 AIHA Connect National Conference will be held in Columbus, Ohio from May 20-22, 2024.
2. Registration for the conference opened on December 4, 2023, and the discount rate will be in effect until March 17, 2024.
3. **Pricing for students is \$249 for AIHA Members (\$149 for Stay & Save Discount)**
4. Go to the AIHA Connect 2024 Link at <https://aihaconnect.org/register>
5. Submission for Educational Pop-Ups, Student Presentations and Student Poster
6. Sessions are being accepted until March 13, 2024.
  - a) Poster Sessions for Students is May 21, 2024, from 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Find more information at this link: <https://aihaconnect.org/get-involved/call-for-proposals>



## Remembering Venkatram "Raj" Dharmarajan, Ph.D., CIH

We are sad to share news of the recent passing of long-time Pittsburgh AIHA member and friend, Raj Dharmarajan on December 16, 2023. Many of you may know Raj who worked as an Industrial Hygienist with Bayer MaterialScience for over 30 years and more recently as a part-time consultant for AM Health & Safety. Raj always enjoyed participating in our Pittsburgh AIHA events and was a regular at our winter and summer business meetings. We will certainly miss him!

Please take a moment to read the obituary posted here:

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/venkatram-dharmarajan-obituary?id=53882952>

## Save the Date - Thursday March 21, 2024 - President's Luncheon



Mark your calendar for the annual Pittsburgh AIHA President's Luncheon to be held on Thursday, March 21, 2024 at the [LeMont Restaurant on Mt. Washington in Pittsburgh](#). Please plan to join us to welcome National AIHA President, [Dina M. Siegel, CIH, CSP, CBSP, FAIHA](#), to Pittsburgh.

Online registration will open late January 2024; an email will be sent once posted.

## Pittsburgh AIHA Corporate Sponsorship Drive is Underway!

**Support the Pittsburgh AIHA as a Corporate Sponsor!** The benefits of a Corporate Sponsorship contribution of \$250 include:

- 2 free individual Pittsburgh AIHA annual memberships,
- Pittsburgh AIHA Homepage sidebar logo link.
- 1-year listing on the [Pittsburgh AIHA Corporate Sponsors](#) page,
- 1-year listing on the [Pittsburgh AIHA Consultants List](#) page,
- Recognition in Pittsburgh AIHA local section [newsletter](#).

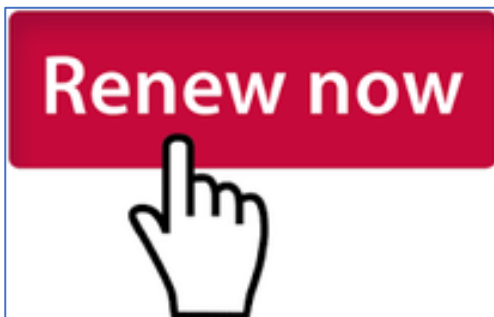
Corporate Sponsorship is renewable on an annual basis. Visit the [Corporate Sponsors Page](#) for current sponsors and application information - You can sign up online, or print the form to complete and mail.

### THANK YOU to the following companies who have already pledged their support in 2024:

- Amazon
- AM Health & Safety, Inc.
- Atlas Technical Consultants
- CSC, Inc.
- Delfino Health & Safety, LLC
- Intertek PSI
- MSA Safety
- U.S. Micro-Solutions, Inc.

*Thank You  
To Our Sponsors*

## 2024 Pittsburgh AIHA Membership Renewal - due 12/31/2023



**NOW COLLECTING - Membership dues for 2024 are due December 31, 2023.** If you are a National AIHA member, remember to check the box for Pittsburgh Local Section to include your LS annual dues of \$35 for your Pittsburgh AIHA membership. All NON-National AIHA members should pay dues directly to the Pittsburgh AIHA. See the highlighted sidebar link on the website homepage to process payment through PayPal -- Note you do not need a PayPal account to pay this way. Any questions, please contact Christy at [ckirsch@pittsburghaiha.org](mailto:ckirsch@pittsburghaiha.org).

## Fall 2023 SRU AIHA Student Section Updates

The students welcomed Mr. Barry Momyer, President of AM Health and Safety and President-Elect of the Pittsburgh AIHA to speak about IH Sampling on November 9, 2023.

The Meeting was opened by the SRU AIHA Student Section President Shayla Wilkinson who updated the attendees on current events and planned tours.

She then introduced the SRU AIHA Student Section Executive Committee members:

- Annalyse Hoover-Vice President,
- Tanner Williams, Treasurer,
- Emily Szczesny, Secretary,
- Sophia Naugle-Social Media.



Sophia spoke about the I AM IH project they have going on. The program encourages the SRU Safety Management Students to take selfies or videos of them using or near the IH Lab or equipment to promote IH and to hold up I AM IH stickers. A very fun way to engage the students with the focus on IH. They then post onto the SRU AIHA Instagram and Facebook pages. The SRU ASSP group and SRU Safety Instagram reposts this for maximum distribution and followers.

The Spring plans for the SRU AIHA Student Section is to attend the Annual Meeting for the Pittsburgh Section and numerous tours at Berry Global and, hopefully, NIOSH.

*Thank you to the SRU AIHA Student Section and Dr. Rona Smeak for providing this update! The Pittsburgh AIHA is proud to support this amazing group of rising safety/IH professionals! Please consider following the SRU AIHA Student Chapter on [Instagram at sru.aiha](#).*

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## Tell Us a Story: My First Fatality Investigation

By: Frank Pokrywka, Pittsburgh AIHA Treasurer, December 13, 2023

They say you never forget your first time and that must be true for many important things in life. As I write this almost 43 years later I still remember getting that phone call early one Sunday morning from a guard at the blast furnace where I worked for less than a year. I had the weekend call for the EH&S Department and the guard was asking me if being exposed to methanol vapors for a brief time posed any hazard. I told him that as long as the workers were not experiencing any dizziness or nausea, they would be fine after getting some fresh air. As I hung up the phone something in my gut didn't seem right and I decided to go to the plant.

Walking into the mill from the parking lot, I ran into the Plant's Assistant General Manager who asked what I was doing there. I told him I got a call from the guard about workers being exposed to methanol vapors and decided to investigate further. I soon learned that phone call was a big-time understatement. Actually, a lab worker from the water quality lab was on his way to the nearby hospital's burn unit. The workers reportedly exposed to the vapors were other lab personnel who were able to catch the worker (a burning torch) running down the hall and douse the flames with their coats. They were mostly uninjured, suffering only minor burns to the hands.

During the investigation later that day we learned the lab worker was performing a common water quality check on boiler water involving 100 ml of methanol. The methanol was stored in a five-gallon plastic carboy dispenser stored on the edge of the lab bench. Because the carboy dispenser valve had a tendency to drip, a trash can, filled with paper towels was positioned below to catch and evaporate the leaking methanol. The lab was a no smoking area, and it was suspected that a person seeing the signs tossed his cigarette into the trash can. A short while later, the lab worker saw flames from the trash can licking at the bottom of the 5-gallon methanol container. Realizing this was a problem, he tried sliding the containers out of the flames but when he did this the sloshing methanol burst the heat softened plastic resulting in a huge fireball that engulfed the worker. His clothing aflame, and skin burning, the worker ran down the hallway screaming when two other workers tackled him and put out the flame. The lab worker was transported to the hospital but despite burn treatments he passed away 3 days later.

In closing, our management at the plant spent days discussing ways to make this lab operation safer obviously getting rid of the carboys and tightening the no smoking policy. Word also spread to other blast furnace operations across the company. Additionally, sharing details of fatalities and lost time injuries throughout the steel industry was what we did back then and hopefully that practice continues today. This gentleman was my first but not my last fatality or lost time injury investigation but one I'll never forget. My one regret after all these years was that I cannot remember his name.

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## Member News:

Congratulations to **Jan Wachter** who is retiring from being a professor in safety sciences at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in January 2024 after 16.5 years of service. Plans after retiring include finishing remodeling his 125-year-old house and looking for part-time work somewhere perhaps as a consultant, trainer or as an adjunct professor doing on-line teaching.

Congratulations to **Steve McGough**, who is retiring after 32 years with Premier Safety.

Welcome to the following new Pittsburgh AIHA members:

- Nicholas Eckle, Amazon
- Zoe DelSignore, Slippery Rock University
- Eva King, Slippery Rock University
- Jared Shepherd, West Virginia University
- Natasha Hope, West Virginia University
- Kellie Bolton, Slippery Rock University
- Morgan Ryan, Intertek-PSI

## 2023-2024 Executive Committee

### **PRESIDENT**

**Dane Mitcheson, CIH, CSP, CHST**  
FedEx Ground

### **PRESIDENT-ELECT**

**Barry Momyer, CIH**  
AM Health and Safety, Inc.

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**Rona Smeak, Ph.D, CSP**  
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## AIHF Scholarship Deadline - February 5, 2024!

With a variety of scholarships available (Pittsburgh AIHA Scholarship is just one!), students in undergraduate and graduate degree programs that lead to a career in industrial hygiene can find varying levels of awards and assistance to further their educational opportunities. See the details by clicking on the links below:

### **AIHF SCHOLARSHIP INFO:**

<https://www.aiha.org/get-involved/aih-foundation/aih-foundation-scholarships>

### **PITTSBURGH AIHA SCHOLARSHIP INFO:**

<https://www.aiha.org/get-involved/aih-foundation/aih-foundation-scholarships/pittsburgh-local-section-scholarship>

**Best wishes to our student members!**



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**Premier Safety**

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