Guide for Using TABLE C-1

The substances listed in Table C-1 are common air contaminants in industrial and nonindustrial environments. The values summarized in this table are from various sources with diverse procedures and criteria for establishing the values. Some are for industrial environments (OSHA, MAK, NIOSH, ACGIH), some are for outdoor environments (NAAQS), and others are general (WHO) or indoor residential environment-related (Canadian) values. The following explanations are intended to assist the reader by providing a brief description of the criteria each agency used in adopting its guideline values.

- NAAQS: Outdoor air standards developed by the U.S. EPA under the Clean Air Act. By law, the values listed in these regulations must be reviewed every five years. These concentrations are selected to protect not only the general population but also the most sensitive individuals.
- OSHA: Enforceable maximum exposures for industrial environments developed by OSHA (U.S. Department of Labor) through a formal rule-making process. Once an exposure limit has been set, levels can be changed only through reopening the rule-making process. These permissible exposure limits (PELs) are not selected to protect the most sensitive individuals.
- MAK: Recommended maximum exposures for industrial environments developed by the Deutsche Forschungs Gemeinschaft, a German institution similar to the U.S. National Institutes of Health and NIOSH. Levels are set on a regular basis, with annual reviews and periodic republication of criteria levels. These levels are enforceable in Germany and are not selected to protect the most sensitive individuals.
- Canadian: Recommended maximum exposures for residences developed in 1987 and reaffirmed in 1995 by a committee of provincial members convened by the federal government to establish consensus guideline-type levels. A revised version is being considered. These are not intended to be enforced.
- WHO/Europe: Environmental (nonindustrial) guidelines developed in 1987 and updated in 1999 by the WHO Office for Europe (Denmark). Intended for application both to indoor and outdoor exposure.
- NIOSH: Recommended maximum exposure guidelines for industrial environments are developed by NIOSH (Centers for Disease Control) and published in a series of criteria documents. NIOSH criteria documents contain both a review of the literature and a recommended exposure limit (REL) guideline. These are not enforceable, are not reviewed regularly, and are not selected to protect the most sensitive individuals. In some cases, they are set at levels above those deemed protective of health because commonly available industrial hygiene practice does not reliably detect the substances at lower levels. (Note that methods used in nonindustrial settings are often more sensitive than NIOSH methods for industrial hygiene measurements.)
- ACGIH: Recommended maximum exposures for industrial environments developed by ACGIH's Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) Committee. The committee reviews the scientific literature and recommends exposure guidelines. The assumptions are for usual industrial working conditions, 40-hour weeks, and single exposures. Surveillance practices for both exposures and biological responses are often in place in the work environments where these levels are used. These levels are not selected to protect the most sensitive individuals. About half of the TLVs are intended to protect against irritation. Published studies have shown that many of the TLVs intended to protect against irritation actually represent levels where some or all of the study subjects did report irritation [C-33, C-34].

The table is not inclusive of all contaminants in indoor air, and achieving the listed indoor concentrations for all of the listed substances does not ensure odor acceptability, avoidance of sensory irritation, or all adverse health effects for all occupants. In addition to indoor contaminant levels, the acceptability of indoor air also involves thermal conditions, indoor moisture levels as they impact microbial growth, and other indoor environmental factors. ASHRAE is not selecting or recommending default concentrations.

Users of this table should recognize that unlisted noxious contaminants can also cause unacceptable IAQ with regard to comfort (sensory irritation), odors, and health. When such contaminants are known or might reasonably be expected to be present, selection of an acceptable concentration and exposure may require reference to other guidelines or a review and evaluation of relevant toxicological and epidemiological literature.