

Standard-Setting Committee on Biological Hazards

Clarification on terminology and implications of using "biological hazards" vs. "biological risks" in the Proposed Conclusions

Definitions and distinctions

Within the context of the ILO, reference to the concept of hazard and risk can be found in the [*ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems, ILO-OSH 2001*](#), adopted by tripartite constituents in 2001:

- **Hazard** is defined as the inherent potential to cause injury or damage to people's health.
- **Risk** is defined as a combination of the likelihood of an occurrence of a hazardous event and the severity of injury or damage to the health of people caused by this event.

These notions are of common use by occupational safety and health professionals.

In the context of the Proposed Conclusions, one example of hazard would be a pathogenic microorganism that has the potential to cause disease, while a risk corresponds to the probability and potential severity of an infection occurring due to exposure to a pathogenic microorganism.

Terminology in ILO standards should be consistent, meaning that the concept of hazard and risk to be included in new standards on safety and health at work would need to be coherent with terminology used in Conventions already adopted, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), among many others. For example, the use of the term "hazard" in Convention No. 170 is related to the hazardous properties of chemical substances (Articles 2, 6, 7 and 8), while the term "risk" is associated with the assessment of frequency/ probability and severity, (Article 13).