See What The Experts Are Saying About Open Range Software...

Home, Home on the Range ... Software Creates Room to Play

By Kevin Santee

... where industrial hygienists and their data can play. Open Range Software® offers a suite of programs for "playing" in such areas as medical surveillance, risk analysis and job hazard analyses. The sweetest of the suite may be the Industrial Hygiene Sampling Database. Also called the Comprehensive Tracking System, the program boasts more than 16 key features for managing sampling, analytical and reporting IH information. Without time to explore every feature, this review will take a short cruise through the sampling process.

From "Sampling," the user is led to a master menu. This screen is divided into three categories for manipulating or adding data. The program then prompts the user to select the type of sample they are interested in (personal, area, air, surface, etc.). Clicking on "Sampling Survey" then leads to the sampling screen, where a new sample event can be entered or previous information searched.

For an upcoming sample event, the user adds preliminary information such as site, date and title under the Add New button. This is then displayed along the top of the master screen. The Survey ID must be unique but can fit any protocol defined by the user. Site and company information must be entered in the Administration section in order to be displayed here. An amazing number of variables associated with the sampling event can be entered using the Data Input buttons.

For example, clicking on "Workplace Conditions" permits recording of the ambient variables associated with that event such as weather, area description or even local engineering controls (see Figure 3). Other forms allow the input of all remaining sampling information. The program offers automatic calculations for computing sample minutes, flow rates from calibration data and final volume, based on raw data entered.

Exposure limits can be defined and edited by the user. One interesting exposure-related feature is the TWA Manager. Using this tool, two or more samples can be merged into a single employee time-weighted average. Speaking of TWAs, the Comprehensive Tracking System comes with an exposure group section where representative sampling can be applied to an entire group of employees based on their job titles, work areas or similar criteria.

Reporting and Customization

Reporting comes in many different styles and formats. For elevated exposures, the IH may wish to issue an Employee Notification Report. Using a template, the user customizes the header and text to match the corporate environment and clearly display all relevant exposure data. The Comprehensive Tracking System comes with other standard reports or the user may choose to customize their own report. All customized reports can be saved for later use.

Reports may be e-mailed or exported for printing in HTML, Adobe PDF® or Microsoft Excel® formats. However, each report must be generated manually, which brings up one shortcoming of this application. There is no auto-e-mailing available within the program. For example, while it might be advantageous to have an Employee Notification Report sent automatically following a sampling episode, there is no such function within the Comprehensive Tracking System. Another reporting drawback is the limitation of customization to text data. Reports do not permit insertion of graphics such as company logos, photos or graphs.

Aside from these limitations, the Comprehensive Tracking System allows for corporate-specific customization in its master lists. For example, employee human resource databases, equipment inventories and/or job titles can be imported directly from existing corporate systems. These later form pull-down menus on the sampling screens. Duplicate and expired information can be cleaned from these lists through the use of a Comprehensive Tracking System tool. The program also comes with its own large list of chemical hazards for referencing in the sampling section.

All macro features of the IH Software Database are defined in the Administration section of the program. Security levels can be established from the organizational level all the way down to the user level. Data integrity is maintained with the ability to lock all information at the conclusion of a sampling event.

The IH Software Database appears overall to be largely constructed with the corporate IH in mind. Site and company information are assumed to be static since they reside in the administration section. Also, the HR employee import and PPE features are less applicable to an independent IH consultant.

Despite this, few discouraging words can be said about this comprehensive, Web-enabled, Oracle database application. To learn more, visit www.openrangesoftware.com.

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