



Press Release

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Environment Ministry to realize an environmentally safe and healthy society for the people

– Annual work plans for environmental health and chemical safety for 2023 –

Sejong, February 2 – On January 26, the Ministry of Environment (Minister Han Wha-jin) announced its annual work plans for environmental health and chemical safety for 2023 under the theme of 'safe lives from environmental risks.' The Ministry of Environment has a vision of a better environment, higher quality of life, and new growth engines.

In 2023, the Ministry of Environment plans to pursue policies to realize an environmentally safe and healthy society for the public. The Ministry of Environment will replace measuring networks of environmental noise with IoT-based automatic measuring networks from manual ones to provide real-time information (previously once a quarter). It will enable people to check information on noise in real-time that they experience in their daily lives. The Ministry also plans to expand the scope of its health impact survey to cover cement factories and heavy traffic areas. It also aims to provide environmental health services for areas with severe environmental damage, such as medical assistance. In addition to verifying the safety and effectiveness of biocidal substances used in household products, such as disinfectants and insecticides, the Ministry plans to test biocidal products thoroughly to ensure safe consumer use. The Ministry of Environment will also strengthen the scientific research base by introducing 3D simulation techniques to investigate the cause of repeated chemical accidents so that it prevents similar accidents from occurring in the future.

The major policies of the Environmental Health Bureau for 2023 are as follows

Advanced management of environmental risk factors in people's daily life

The Ministry of Environment will enhance indoor environmental quality by improving measurement, facilities, and management.

The Ministry plans to launch a pilot project to monitor real-time indoor air quality by installing sensors in public-use facilities, such as daycare centers and large stores. The Ministry will prepare and distribute guidelines for managing air quality so that public-use facility owners can manage indoor air quality effectively. It will also prepare a plan to improve standards for indoor air quality that considers the actual utilization pattern of public facilities and their impact on health. The Ministry will continue the projects to reduce ultrafine dust, such as replacing and improving old ventilation facilities in subway stations. The Ministry will continue to measure indoor radon levels in houses and community centers for free, provide consulting services, and construct to reduce radon levels.

The Ministry of Environment plans to build a technology base and diversify its support to closely manage environmental risk factors, such as inter-floor noise and asbestos. The Ministry will upgrade national noise monitoring networks from manual to real-time automatic monitoring systems (145 in 2022 → 280 in 2023). In addition, the Ministry will build and operate precision monitoring networks in cities with a population of 500,000 or more (81 in 2022 → 86 in 2023) to strengthen its foundation for noise management. The Ministry will also strengthen the standards for inter-floor noise and expand the locations and operating hours of 'Among Neighbors Center' for Floor Noise to reduce public inconvenience. It will cooperate with local governments to extend the free rental of noise meters and provide conflict management training. In addition, the Ministry will consider including small-scale children's facilities and public rental houses as buildings subject to asbestos investigation and safety management, thus expanding support for asbestos safety management consulting in buildings.

The Ministry will establish a foundation for preemptive environmental health management through collaboration with concerned agencies.

The Ministry plans to operate a ministerial consultative body to respond to microplastic issues effectively. In the consultative body, concerned ministries will share and discuss policies and R&D

related to microplastics. The Ministry will disclose big data in environmental health established by linking data in the environmental, health, social, and economic sectors. The environment ministry will cooperate with concerned ministries, local governments, and research institutes to develop a GIS-based environmental hazard and health impact analysis system. The Ministry plans to open and operate a national environmental health specimen bank. The facility will store human-derived materials (blood, urine, etc.) collected from research and investigation in the field of environmental health at ultra-low temperatures (below -180°C) for analyses and applications.

Consumer-centered investigation and management of health damage & Customized support for environmental health

The Ministry of Environment will expand and strengthen the investigation and management of environmentally vulnerable areas.

The Ministry will preemptively conduct health impact surveys in areas where factories and residential districts are mixed or areas around power plants. The Ministry will also expand the scope of health impact surveys so that it will conduct basic investigations on areas around cement factories and heavy traffic areas.

The Ministry will stably and continuously support remedies for those suffering damage caused by humidifier disinfectants and environmental pollution. The Ministry will impose and collect corporate contributions to be financed for a remedy for damage caused by humidifier disinfectants. At the same time, the Ministry will continue to support the victims. Examples of assistance include health checkups, customized counseling, and legal aid. In cases where it is difficult to identify the cause of severe environmental pollution damage, the Ministry will specify the criteria for determining the damage and provide environmental health services, such as medical assistance. For residents with homes suspected of asbestos damage, the Ministry will dispatch personnel to check for any damage and send damage assessment results to the residents via mobile so they can immediately check the results.

The Ministry of Environment will strengthen the monitoring and management of environmental health to minimize children's exposure to environmental hazards.

The Ministry plans to guide local governments and education offices to inspect children's play areas (4,000 facilities) and upgrade 120 facilities. The Ministry has also developed a computer system to

guide and inspect children's play areas for trial applications. The Ministry will assess environmental risk factors (about 40 types) contained in children's products, such as toys and stationery, and operate public-private monitoring teams to monitor the redistribution of hazardous children's products to markets. The Ministry is also planning outreach environmental health classes to raise awareness of children's environmental health and preparing a roadmap to develop environmental health textbooks. In addition, the Ministry distributes environmental health education programs for pregnant women and the elderly.

Reinforce safety management of household chemical products

The Ministry of Environment plans to strengthen the safety management of household chemical products.

The Ministry will expand the scope of managing consumer chemical products subject to safety verification. It will also designate items concerned to be harmful (two items: arts and crafts finishes and paint supplements) as the ones subject to control. The Ministry will also add uses to existing management items for six uses. The Ministry will expand safety investigations on household chemical products subject to safety verification in the market. It aims to eradicate the distribution of illegal household chemical products by increasing online surveillance according to changes in consumption patterns, such as increases in online purchases.

The Ministry will only permit the distribution of biocidal substances and products with proven safety and effectiveness. The Ministry completed an evaluation for the safety and effectiveness of 48 biocidal substances with approval grace periods until the end of 2022. The Ministry will inspect not to manufacture, import, sell, or distribute unapproved substances. The Ministry will prepare test and evaluation methods and guidelines to ensure that the approval process for biocidal products containing approved substances will go smoothly without any problems. It will assist industries in preparing the application for approval and hold briefing sessions.

Establish a safe and sustainable chemical management system

The Ministry of Environment plans to reduce hazards caused by chemicals by switching to low-toxic green chemical systems.

The Ministry will establish a 'Comprehensive Plan for Green Chemistry' to reduce the use of toxic chemicals throughout their life cycle from their manufacturing stage. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to fundamentally reduce risks caused by hazardous chemicals. This plan includes establishing scientific infrastructure, such as a mid-to-long-term roadmap for developing alternative materials and low-toxic processes, building a governance model of public-private-industry, and developing IT tools and management technologies to reduce the use of chemicals throughout their lifecycle.

The Ministry plans to institutionalize the direction of reforming chemical safety systems to more effectively prevent and manage public health and environmental risks caused by chemical substances. According to the 'reform plan for designation and management system of toxic substances according to risk' prepared in December 2022, the Ministry will prepare for the amendments of the Act on Registration and Evaluation of Chemical Substances and the Chemical Substances Control Act by August 2023. In addition, the Ministry plans to prepare a roadmap to manage chronic hazardous substances according to their risk characteristics because chronic hazardous substances cause harm under long-term exposure at low concentrations. It aims to alleviate concerns about hazards caused by chemical exposure to the human body. There is also a plan to improve the system's effectiveness in producing, transmitting, and using the information on the risk factors of using small amounts of chemical substances. To achieve this, the Ministry will conduct a pilot project to report the results of chemical hazard classification and the data source used for classification and disclose the chemical hazard information. The Ministry will prepare measures to manage substances that do not have such information that is a currently blind spot for management. The Ministry will prepare measures to improve the chemical safety system based on social consensus after discussions with the industry and civil society through the Public-Industry-Government Chemical Safety Policy Forum (from May 2021).

Establish a reliable system for chemical accident prevention and preparedness

The Ministry plans to strengthen functions to prevent chemical accidents by scientifically analyzing the cause of accidents and providing support for managing facilities.

The Ministry will improve infrastructure for chemical accidents investigation to scientifically identify the cause of accidents with a focus on repeated and similar accidents. It also aims to prevent chemical accidents in advance by inspecting if workplaces with risks of similar accidents (400

cases) implement plans for chemical accident prevention and management. The Ministry will raise the effectiveness of government support to improve old facilities by increasing the number of items (16 → 27) to prevent chemical accidents in SMEs. Experts from the Korea Environment Corporation will visit sites to consult on technologies for safely managing facilities handling hazardous chemicals. The Ministry plans to expand free support projects (900 in 2022 → 1,300 in 2023) to enhance the chemical safety capabilities of SMEs.

The Ministry plans to strengthen cooperation with local governments, residents, companies, and related organizations to protect residents. The Ministry will expand regional emergency response systems (28 local governments in 2022 → 32 local governments in 2023) involving local governments, related agencies, citizens, experts, and businesses. It will facilitate safe chemical management and timely responses to chemical accidents. The Ministry will expand specialized training courses (865 people in 2022 → 1,000 people in 2023) to enhance the capabilities of first responders to chemical accidents, such as firefighters and police officers. The Ministry will strengthen cooperation between ministries by pursuing pilot projects to share information between departments, such as using fire engine cameras to take pictures of on-site situations.

The Ministry of Environment will continue to protect people from environmental hazards and actively pursue policies for sensitive and vulnerable groups.