

AFRICA - Round 42 Report

This report is a summary of Round 42 of the AFRICA international reference scheme for asbestos fibre counting. IOM is pleased to confirm that the AFRICA Scheme is now running smoothly with a total of 31 members. Round 42 took place between June and October 2009. Twenty-seven laboratories from 15 different countries participated, and results were received from all laboratories.

Reference samples

The AFRICA reference samples comprise a mixture of asbestos fibre types and densities. All samples have been collected as air samples on membrane filters and are mounted on



glass microscope slides. Each reference sample has an assigned value (or *reference count*), which is the *median of at least 15 previous evaluations* from fibre counting laboratories, and is reported as the number of fibres per square millimetre of filter surface.

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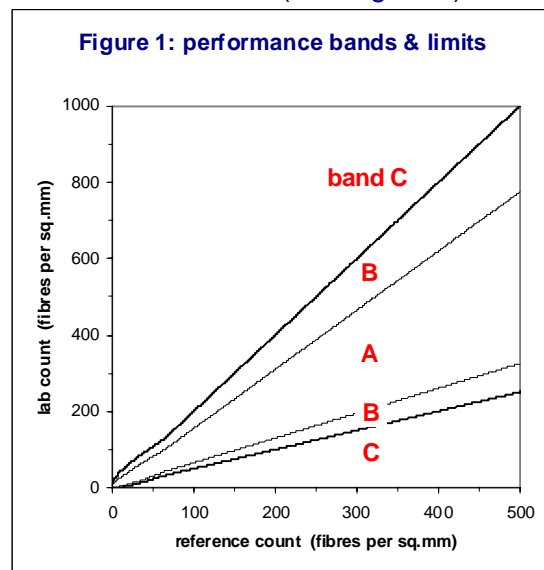
Organisation of rounds

In the scheme, batches of samples are circulated around groups of participating laboratories. Each batch consists of eight reference samples, plus two "candidates" (new samples included to obtain enough counts to calculate a stable reference count). Each laboratory evaluated one batch of samples during the round.

Performance criteria

Individual reports showing results in relation to the reference counts for the eight reference samples have already been sent to each participant. The usual criteria have

been applied to the results: each laboratory has been given a rating of 1 (best), 2 or 3, depending on how well its counts agree with the reference counts (see Figure 1).



A rating of 1 or 2 is normally regarded as satisfactory counting performance, while a rating of 3 should be considered unsatisfactory.

Comparison with previous rounds

Table 1 (overleaf) compares the performance ratings obtained by laboratories who participated in both Rounds 41 and 42. As usual, most laboratories maintained rating 1 performance. A couple of laboratories improved, while others worsened. Of the nine laboratories new to or re-joining the scheme, six received a rating 1. Only two laboratories received the unsatisfactory rating 3, both of which were new to the scheme and have been offered advice as to how to improve in future rounds.

The overall performance of AFRICA members over 10 years is shown in Figure 2.

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GOVERNORS: PROFESSOR RUSSEL GRIGGS, SIR FRANK DAVIES, PROFESSOR PHILIP LOVE CBE.

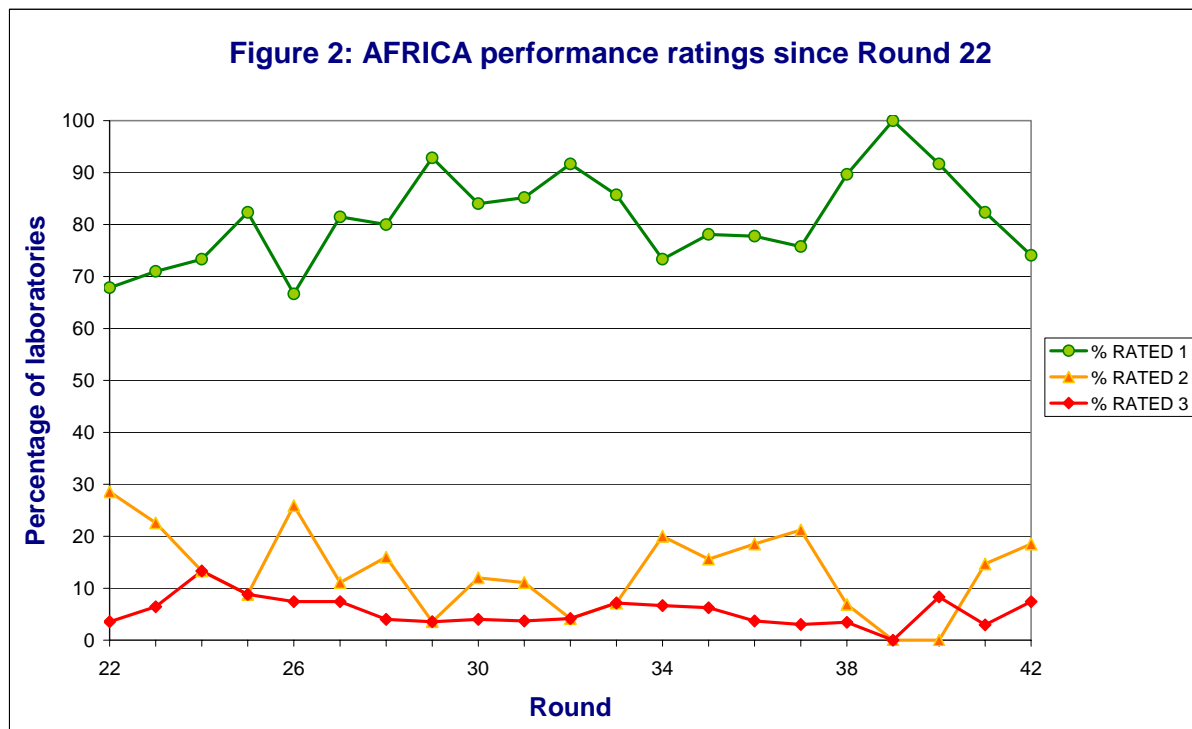
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Table 1: Comparison of AFRICA ratings between Rounds 41 and 42

		Round 42 rating				TOTAL
		1	2	3	did not participate	
Round 41 rating	1	12	4	0	12	28
	2	1	0	0	4	5
	3	1	0	0	0	1
	did not participate	6	1	2	-	9
TOTAL		20	5	2	16	43



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