

REACHing the Profession

This year's occupational hygiene conference in Glasgow gave us a hugely successful and well attended workshop on REACH. This included excellent presentations from Rob Turner, Hans Marquart, Christine Northage, Chris Money and Andy Gillies. Thank you to all those who completed the forms at the end of the session, volunteering help and support to BOHS's REACH steering group. These are being compiled and reviewed, and we will be in touch. This group is chaired by Andy Gillies, with Rob Turner, Steve Bailey, Alison Margary, Mike Ellwood and myself making up the rest of the group. It has been a busy first year for the group and we are progressing a variety of initiatives. This includes newsletter articles and seminars, monthly updates to the BOHS hot topics page on REACH, liaising with competent authorities, case studies on Risk Management Measures and awareness raising etc. We are also producing a layman's guide to occupational exposure, although we are struggling to define a layman in this context.

There is little doubt that the impact of REACH on our profession will be significant. Its previous incarnations, the Existing Substances Regulations and Notifications of New Substances Regulations, had little, if any, impact on the day to day life of an occupational hygienist. But now, your employer and your clients will be asking you whether compliance has been achieved and what on earth DNELs are. You have only just got them used to WELs! But it's new to all of us and although we are starting to understand the general requirements and concepts, we don't know yet what the detail will look like. What will an Exposure Scenario look like or a modified safety data sheet? What do I do if the DNEL is an order of magnitude below the WEL, particularly if I've been telling the boss for years that the process is well controlled?

Guidance is being developed by the European Chemicals Bureau (ECB). For example RIP (REACH Implementation Project) 3 is producing guidance documents for industry. In particular RIP 3.2 will develop a Guidance Document for manufacturers, importers and down-stream users of chemicals on how they can carry out the chemical safety assessment and document it in a chemical safety report and how to communicate information using the safety data sheet (SDS) according to REACH.

BOHS needs to keep abreast of developments and at the same time provide input, through the steering group and individual members, to the development of such guidance. We also want to ensure the UK experts on the control of hazardous substances in the workplace (i.e. occupational hygienists), are kept up to speed with developments in order that we remain at the forefront of improving worker health. Throughout the rest of 2007 and into 2008, we will continue to run seminars, such as the Open Technical Seminar, "How to REACH 2007", held in Norwich in March. This OTS is likely to be repeated in Manchester later in the year as well as in other locations. Would you like more of the same or seminars / courses focusing on particular aspects (e.g. preparing an Exposure Scenario)? Consideration has been given to one day REACH Awareness courses, which are developed as a training course and delivered to a small audience. As occupational hygienists, we have many of the necessary skills, we just need to know how to use them in the context of REACH.

Are there particular topics you would like to see for newsletter articles? We have already had:

- 1) REACH – What is it; What is the Role for Occupational Hygiene; and What is BOHS Doing? (Rob Turner, November 2006).
- 2) What does reach really mean for occupational hygiene? (Chris Money, February 2007)
- 3) REACH – will "derived no-effect levels" (DNELs), set under reach, replace occupational exposure limits? (Steve Bailey; February 2007)

These were excellent articles but what concerns you now, what do you want to know? For example:

- 1) "Views from the frontline". Articles from the regulator, from trade association and from manufacturers / importers on how they see implementation and compliance.
- 2) Exposure Assessments and sources of exposure data and its use, interpretation and limitations?
- 3) A pull out spread showing an example Exposure Scenario and modified safety data sheet.

4) REACH implementation across the EU. Views from other member states.

Don't be left behind, these regulations are the biggest thing to hit our profession since COSHH, albeit with a few more pages to read. So if you have burning issues you would like BOHS to address let us know. If you have ideas for seminars, courses or articles let us know. Visit the REACH pages on the BOHS website regularly and contribute to the debates on the REACH Forum (members access). Similarly, if you want to offer an article, then please, please get in touch.

Don't stay out of REACH (sorry); contact Martin Stear at martin.stear@healthsafetyspecialists.co.uk with your ideas, requests or offers of help.

Martin Stear, REACH Steering Group