

Do You Really Need to Prepare for Reach Now?

By Alex Scott



A large number of chemical firms will have to come to grips with the European Union's (EU) registration, Evaluation, and Authorization of Chemicals (reach) legislation program in 2007. A final version of Reach was ultimately agreed to at the end of 2006.

In a recent webinar on Reach held by CW and sponsored by SAP and affiliate itelligence (Feltham, U.K.), (<http://www.chemweek.com/newsletters/cwfree/webcast/wc-REACHsponsor.html>), it was apparent that there is still a high level of uncertainty across the chemical industry about how much a company has to do to comply with Reach, how much it would cost, and when to start taking action.

It may appear from Reach deadlines published by the European commission that there is plenty of time for manufacturers to ensure that they will be Reach compliant. The first deadline for substances produced in excess of 1,000 m.t./year will be June 2010, three years from the implementation of Reach, which is slated for June 2007.

However, some experts tell Chemical Week (CW) that given the complexity of data management, and issues surrounding data sharing and creation of consortia, that those timelines will actually be "pretty tight."

Although the first deadline is 2010, chemical firms will not know who are the other producers of that chemical until December 2008, by which time they will have only 18 months to create consortia that would manage data sharing and potentially undertake safety research on a given product. "The timelines are very tight-I wouldn't like to say if that's achievable" says Tim Jessel, head of Chemical Industries Association's (CIA;UK) Reach advisory service ReachReady.

Chemical producers, among other time consuming Reach activi-

ties, will be required to talk with their customers and suppliers to determine how to proceed with a substance that is subject to Reach's authorization procedure. Questions will inevitably arise such as "who will apply for authorization?" says Melvyn Whyte, owner and head of chemicals firm Whyte Group, and president of the Chemical Business Association (CBA) and a speaker at the recent webinar.

Other key decisions that must be made when considering a substance that may be subject to authorization include deciding whether to submit a substitution plan for a given substance. The time for taking the appropriate actions will be short; "don't wait for the submission deadline," Whyte warns.

The added concern about the deadlines among some leading industry executives is that the rate of processing at the chemical dossiers for Reach could be extremely slow. Such concerns appear to have foundation; there will be something in the order of 30,000 chemicals dossiers being delivered to the European Chemicals Agency (ECA; Helsinki), which in 2007 will have a staff of just 100 rising to 400 in 2010.

Consensus among the experts is that it is better to start taking action on Reach now. The first three actions a company must take are the identification of substances relevant to Reach reporting; recording and processing information on these substances; and transferring data and reconciling it with data within the commission, said Stefan Ellerbrake managing director/Western Europe for itelligence: <http://www.itelligencegroup.co.uk/en/industries/210.php> speaking at the webinar "Failure to organize processes will lead to additional costs and risks," Ellerbrake says. itelligence is offering chemical firms the capability to set up automated Reach reporting and dossier production systems that enables a company to readily meet its Reach requirements, Ellerbrake adds.

Reach Timeline

Substances with import or manufactured in excess of 1000 Tonnes per annum	3 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V & VI and testing proposals as per Annexes VII & VIII
All substances classified as carcinogenic, Mutagenic or Reprotoxic (CMR) category 1 or 2, as per Classification and Labelling regulations 67/548/EEC	3 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V & VI and testing proposals as per Annexes VII & VIII
Substances classified as very toxic to aquatic organisms R50-53, as per Classification and Labelling regulations 67/548/EEC import or manufactured in excess of 100 Tonnes	3 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V & VI and testing proposals as per Annexes VII & VIII
Substances with import or manufactured in excess of 100 Tonnes but less than 1000 tonnes per annum	6 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V & VI and testing proposals as per Annexes VII
Substances with import or manufactured in excess of 10 Tonne but less than 100 tonnes per annum	11 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V & VI
Substances with import or manufactured in excess of 1 Tonne but less than 10 tonnes per annum	11 years after entry into force	The information specified in Annexes V

Even taking a highly organized approach to Reach, the direct costs from the program could be substantial. The European Commission has published the up-front registration and authorization costs for the processing of each chemical dossier, and experts agree that they alone could have a major financial impact on a manufacturer, especially for a small specialty chemicals firm with a broad range of products. There will also be indirect costs that are more difficult to quantify. Those indirect costs will include adapting SDSs, undertaking the appropriate communication, and addressing confidentiality issues, Whyte says. Just the cost of tests to evaluate the safety of certain chemicals could run into the tens of thousand of dollars for one substance, Whyte adds.