



Stronger Responsible Care®

The CMA is embracing zero discharge and public reporting

"Imagine making more goods from fewer resources and throwing virtually nothing away. That's not just some utopian dream—it's part of the 10-year plan at a leading chemical company, and it's probably the future of the industry at large."

—February '99 Chemical Processing cover story, "Eco-efficiency: Hype or the Future?"

Some readers seemed skeptical about the vision of the future offered in our February cover story on eco-efficiency and sustainable development. But guess what? It could happen faster than predicted! Especially if the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) succeeds in building momentum with the new enhancements to their Responsible Care® campaign (see News section, pg 19).

While stopping short of using the phrase "sustainable development," the CMA has announced changes in the six Guiding Principles of Responsible Care. They've added two commitments that embrace a future of sustainable development: "We will make continuous progress toward the vision of no accidents, injuries or harm to the environment and will publicly report our global health, safety and environmental progress;" and, "We will lead our companies in ways that increasingly benefit society, the economy and the environment."

Catalyzed by crisis

Dec. 3, 1983, a toxic gas leak from a chemical plant in Bhopal, India, migrated to surrounding areas, killing some 3,000 people in the worst disaster in the history of the chemical industry. And it happened in a modern plant run by Union Carbide. Within four months, the CMA developed the Community Awareness and Emergency Response program. At the same time, the Canadian Chemical Producers Association responded to public concern by introducing a broader program in 1986, "Responsible Care," based on six guiding principles. CMA liked the Canadian approach and adopted it Oct. 31, 1988.

The six codes of management practice at the heart of the Responsible Care initiative are emergency response and community dialogue, pollution prevention, process safety, distribution, employee health and safety, and product stewardship. More than 100 "practices" are listed in all, and companies evaluate their progress with the goal of having all "practices in place" before Jan. 1, 2000.

The new enhancements are arriving on the 10th anniversary of Responsible Care and they're accompanied by performance-based goals to replace the "practice-in-place" goals. Each CMA member and partner is now required to: "establish company-specific performance goals, which could range from adopting as a goal the vision set forth in the new

Guiding Principles to a goal whose scope is more defined; make steady improvement progress over time; and report annually to the public and CMA."



Gaining trust

In spite of the effort that Responsible Care has stimulated and the progress that's been made, the chemical industry has failed, by and large, to gain the public trust. That's well recognized by a number of chemical industry leaders who are now arming themselves with this enhanced second generation of Responsible Care.

Employees of the chemical industry are the cornerstone of for gaining the public trust. They'll build relationships with the community through public awareness programs, emergency response planning and the upcoming worst-case scenario communications.

And all this is coming at a time when trust is eroding between employers and employees who are still smarting from downsizing and restructuring.

Prerequisite for success

The long-term success of programs to gain the public trust requires a commitment to strengthening the bond of trust between employees and employers.

This month's cover story, "Industry Leaders Roundtable" (pg 26), includes a discussion by CP's Editorial Advisory Board on the subject of "retaining qualified and experienced people and gaining their trust." In observing changes in the workplace, board member Earl Beaver pointedly asked if "companies are prepared for the consequences of the loss of loyalty?"

Is a piece missing from the enhanced Responsible Care? In seeking to gain the public trust, doesn't the industry also need continuous improvement in building employee-employer trust?

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