



Marginal or mainstream thinking?

Sustainable development principles and eco-efficiency gaining momentum

Last month's cover story, "Eco-efficiency: hype or the future?" is getting a lot of attention. And there's more to come—*Chemical Processing* will continue to explore the notion that companies have to embrace sustainable development for eco-efficiency methods to bear fruit. We'll scan the industry for champions who are achieving quantum-leap performance.

Meanwhile, the federal government and some states are recognizing the importance of sustainable development and looking for ways to reward companies that lead the effort. In his State of the Union address in January, President Clinton said:

"...our most fateful new challenge is the threat of global warming; 1998 was the warmest year ever recorded. Last year's heat waves, ice storms and floods are but a hint of what future generations may endure if we don't act now.

"So tonight, I propose a new clean air fund to help communities reduce pollution, and tax incentives and investments to spur clean energy technologies. And I will work with Congress to reward companies that take early, voluntary action to reduce greenhouse gases."

No matter what side of the global warming debate you are on, the incentives to innovate and lead are being stepped up. And the United States isn't alone. An impressive Canadian project and a dramatic European effort were presented at the annual conference on Corporate Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Excellence held in New York, Feb. 2-3 by the Conference Board.

Integrated EH&S pays off

The two megaprojects, Syncrude Canada's \$24 billion oil sands development project and Dow Europe's "ValuePark," embody the Conference Board's theme of "Harvesting EHS value for business growth."

EHS conference keynote speaker James Carter, president and chief operating officer of Syncrude Canada Ltd., told attendees Canada's oil sands industry represents 26% of that nation's crude oil production, with the potential to become 50% by 2007. Carter said oil sands, a sunrise industry in Canada, got a boost three years ago when the National Oil Sands Task Force helped launch a new era of development with regulatory and tax breaks. An estimated \$6 billion will be spent between now and 2007 to reach the 50% target.

Carter said 25% of the world's countries are smaller in size than the company's leased oil sands areas, and the company's utility plant could supply power for a city of 300,000.

In the early '80s, Syncrude began working to improve employee safety and plant reliability. Carter pointed to a discovery the company made along the way: "The mind-set that causes people to reduce personal injury is exactly the same mind-set you need to achieve plant reliability—reliability in terms of more on-line time and more production from

capital assets."

Carter said improvements in reliability had brought some \$125 million a year to the bottom line.

Eco-innovation compass

A new project to watch at the heart of the chemical industry is Dow Europe's ValuePark. Dow's Swiss-based Claude Fussler presented the plan for wasteland reclamation (half

a billion dollars investment by the year 2000) followed by development of a world-class processing facility.

Fussler, who developed the Dow eco-innovation compass described in last month's cover story, is getting a chance to test his planning tool in a big way. Goals for the facility include:

- Integration toward zero waste;
- World-scale economics and low impact;
- Enhanced value chains and eco-efficiency;
- Value growth;
- Positive community impact including 2,000 new jobs in a region with 20% unemployment.



Repairing a tarnished image

Anyone who doubts the need to adopt sustainable development principles can look to the tobacco industry. Loud, extended applause erupted when President Clinton, in his State of the Union message, described plans to recover more health care costs from tobacco companies.

Just imagine a future president taking on the chemical industry for toxins emitted into the atmosphere. It could happen even though the facilities comply with today's regulations. Is sustainable development just some marginal hype or does it represent clear-headed mainstream thinking?

CP editors will continue to look for companies that lead the way to sustainable development. Let us know your challenges, successes and concerns.

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