

Top 10 Tips – Dealing with the REACH regulation

Supplied by: Alemare Solutions Limited



REACH is a complex European regulation to ensure that chemicals can be used safely. It is aimed at chemical manufacturers and importers but did you realise that, as a customer, you may also need to know about REACH? In fact, your whole business could be at risk...

- 1.** Appoint somebody to organise the REACH project and keep up with the guidelines as they are published. It doesn't have to be your safety manager because almost everyone will be involved at some time.
- 2.** Identify exactly what substances you manufacture or import into Europe in quantities larger than one tonne a year. This includes any toll manufacturing. These are the substances that you may have to register. One of the quirks of REACH is that Switzerland is not in Europe!
- 3.** Don't miss the pre-registration window that will only be open from 1 June to 30 November. You need to know the production volume of your substance, its official name and the deadlines for the full registration. It looks like a simple step but do your homework because the penalties for getting it wrong are serious.
- 4.** Review your safety data sheets. If they haven't been updated since June 2007, they almost certainly don't comply with the regulation and the HSE could take action. Identify any hazard information that you have for each substance. Ask your suppliers about hazardous substances in any mixtures that you buy.
- 5.** Document the reasons for decisions that concern the safe use of your products. Keep the records for at least ten years. You need to demonstrate honest efforts to reach sensible judgements.

If all you do is follow the advice above, the authorities shouldn't give you a lot of trouble. Your customers and competition are going to do that.

So start thinking about your whole business:

- 6.** Identify raw materials that are critical to your business. Are they made especially for you? Are there less than three suppliers? What will you do if they are no longer available? Contact suppliers and confirm that they will register the materials for your application. Consider including a term to this effect in your purchasing contracts.
- 7.** Now is a good time to review your supplier list. If your chemicals are coming from non-EU sources, do the importers have the resources to deal with REACH? Identify the suppliers who don't cooperate with your information requests and start looking for alternatives.

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- 8.** Identify and contact your customers. Make sure you understand how they use your products because you have to reflect this in your safety data sheets. Review and update these regularly as the information required will keep changing. Identify customers who won't follow your safety and environment recommendations. REACH states that you won't be allowed to supply them.
- 9.** Start thinking about your IT system. How will you deal with all the information generated by a REACH project?
- 10.** What about the future? REACH has direct and indirect costs that are hard to quantify. Many materials will just become too expensive to service and disappear from the market. You will have to talk to competitors. How will you protect your business secrets? Make sure you don't break Competition Law.

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