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Update

US. Department of Energy

Office of Environment, Safety & Health

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Energy Department, Chemical Industry Sign Landmark Safety Agreement

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) have entered into an agreement to bring the world's most advanced chemical safety practices to Department of Energy sites.

The agreement between the two organizations was signed on August 1, 1996 by Dr. Tara O'Toole, DOE's Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health, and Fred Webber, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Chemical Manufacturers' Association. The agreement will allow the Energy Department access to highly successful programs developed by the chemical industry through its trademarked Responsible Care[®] program.

Dr. O'Toole praised the agreement as "one of the ways the Office of Environment, Safety and Health works as a broker to the real world within the Department of Energy. We find the best industry practices that we know have worked in the private sector and bring them into the DOE complex. Importing such best-in-class practices from the private sector is an efficient way of improving safety practices in the DOE complex which, for almost 50 years, operated in an isolated environment."

The Responsible Care[®] program was developed in response to public and industry concerns about the safety of the chemical industry following the 1986 accident in Bhopal, India. Since adopting the program, the industry has significantly improved its performance. For example, members recently reported a 61 percent decrease in waste emissions and an 11 percent reduction in employee injury and illness rates.

"There tends to be an emphasis on radiological hazards at the Department of Energy, said Dr. O'Toole. "But, as we learned in the Chemical Vulnerability study, chemical hazards are just as serious. Decontamination and decommissioning will bring special hazards to workers, due to the extensive, diverse and often uncharacterized nature of the chemical inventories in many aging facilities,"



DOE Environment, Safety & Health Updates are issued periodically to DOE stakeholders with an interest in protecting the environment and worker health and safety at DOE sites

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The agreement with the chemical industry is one of many commitments the Department made as a result of a Chemical Safety Vulnerability study in 1994. In addition to numerous remedial actions by DOE management, the study identified industry partnerships as key to improving safety at DOE sites.

The Vulnerability Study found that there were 23 major accidents in a two-year period related to hazardous chemicals at DOE sites. Each involved serious worker injury. As a result of implementing the study's recommendations, DOE now has inventoried 50 percent of DOE chemicals: 80 percent will be inventoried by 1987.

Responsible Care[®] comprises six "codes" or guiding principles that include more than 100 specific management practices that have been shown to greatly enhance safety at industrial sites around the world. The six codes are: Community Awareness and Emergency Response, Pollution Prevention, Recess Safety, Employee Health and Safety, Distribution, and Product Stewardship. Responsible Care[®] is currently being implemented in 42 countries.

The agreement between DOE and CMA gives the Department access to Responsible Care[®] resource materials will be made available to DOE, as well as all workshops, seminars, newsletters, and electronic information services. The Chemical Manufacturers Association will also brief DOE or its contractors on how the private sector has developed and used the Responsible Care program to enhance safety and how it can best be applied to DOE sites.

In exchange, as DOE applies Responsible Care[®] concepts at its sites, it will provide the Chemical Manufacturers' Association with information and feedback. The agreement allows DOE the flexibility to adapt or enhance components of the initiative to its unique facilities.

For additional information about how to use Responsible Care[®] resources at DOE facilities, contact Robert Barber at 301-903-3477.

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