

How REACH will affect industry

The Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulations came into force in June 2007. The regulations are changing the way in which all substances are bought, sold, used and controlled across the EU and will have knock-on effects globally.

The 'Substances' regulated in REACH are

- elements in the periodic table,
- all compounds from these elements,
- and every organic compound too – plastics, paper, wood...

there are very few exemptions, mainly substances that are already well regulated (pharmaceuticals, food etc).

REACH also regulates these substances

- on their own, such as trichloroethylene
- in preparations/mixtures, such as paints, adhesives, alloys
- in articles, such as light bulbs, kettles, engines, locomotives, toys

The majority of substances in use today have never been assessed to determine whether they are safe or not. REACH will address this, requiring all substances to be tested during the 'REGISTRATION' part of the process.

Substances will then be 'EVALUATED' by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and if it is considered that they are a 'substance of very high concern', then the substance could become a candidate for AUTHORISATION or RESTRICTION.

AUTHORISATION is the process of phasing out 'substances of very high concern', such as carcinogens, mutagens, reprotoxins, or substances extremely dangerous to the environment. It will require companies to have substitution plans, to use safer alternatives.

RESTRICTION is the process of banning certain substances of very high concern. This process is not new: asbestos was banned using the restriction process.

REACH creates business risks because some substances will no longer be economical to manufacture, and others will be phased out because of their hazardous nature. This will affect the ability of companies to deliver products to time and to budget, and will cause some loss of continuity of supply. All businesses need to consider the risks they have in relation to REACH, and to manage them accordingly.