



- the basics

Your REACH Basics Summary

VERSION 1 (November 2006)



Introduction

REACH, the European Union regulation for the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (due to enter into force in 2007) has one key central aim: to protect human health and the environment from the risks arising from the use of chemicals.

This simple and admirable goal has proved somewhat difficult to achieve. Evolving from an European Commission draft with inputs from industry, member states, the European Parliament and environmental organisations, REACH has become one of the most complex and far-reaching pieces of regulation ever to originate from Brussels.

Perhaps, given the fundamental nature of chemicals as the building blocks of our modern world and vital to everyday life, this should not surprise us.

REACH intends to achieve its goal by requiring business to fully ascertain and make public the risks posed by the use of chemicals. For certain dangerous substances this means that a company will need to define in detail, exactly how to safely use a chemical.

Authorisation

Another of REACH's mechanisms is an authorisation process for substances identified as being of very high concern to human health or the environment. This will mean the hazardous chemical can only be used in ways that are authorised by the REACH authority – the European Chemicals Agency. Any authorised substance is also considered a candidate for substitution with "safer" alternatives.

But how will the agency know what chemicals require authorisation? Much is known about certain substances but for many there are information shortfalls, which prevents a suitable risk assessment. That's where the REACH registration process comes in...

REACH Registration

For many firms REACH registration will be the most costly and time-consuming part of compliance. Generally, anyone that makes or imports a chemical into the EU above 1 tonne per year will need to register it with the Agency (there are exemptions to REACH Registration and our REACHScope tool can help identify them). Registration involves producing a dossier of information in collaboration with other manufacturers or importers. The obligations for manufacturers and importers of a substance are essentially the same.

And if you buy a chemical from a supplier outside the EU, you are an importer!



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Downstream Users

Even if you source your chemicals from within the EU, the chances are you could still be affected. We mentioned that REACH controls the *use* of chemicals...

Everyone that uses a chemical for example, to make a product, to clean a floor, to lubricate a machine, to print on their packaging (etc.etc. - you get the picture!) has to make sure that their particular use of a chemical is listed as a use within dossier. If this sounds like you, you are a "downstream user" and if your use of a chemical isn't part of the registration, then you can't use it!

In Conclusion...

So in practice then, everyone that manufactures a product within the EU is likely to be affected to some degree; if you make or import a chemical substance, REACH is likely to be one of the biggest programmes of work your company will have to undertake over the next 11 years.

REACH comes at a considerable cost, the most accepted overall price tag is €6 billion but REACHReady thinks this is an underestimate! REACH is seen as industry's responsibility and industry, therefore, has to foot the bill.

Worried? – no need to be, REACHReady is here to help and those ready first, will be in a better position to compete.

In addition to providing tools and personal technical support, we can help you develop management strategies that save you time trouble and money.



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