

▶ UNDERSTANDING REACH



What is REACH?

On 18th December 2006 the European Union passed the new chemicals legislation commonly known as REACH, which stands for the **R**egistration, **E**valuation and **A**uthorisation of **C**hemicals. The new Regulation places responsibility on the chemical industry to demonstrate the safety of its products throughout the supply chain.

The new legislation, which entered into force on 1st June 2007, replaces numerous European Union Directives and Regulations previously in force.

Approximately 30,000 chemicals will have to be registered over the next 11 years.

The European Commission believes REACH will deliver significant benefits by:

- providing a high level of protection to human health and the environment;
- fostering innovation within the EU chemicals industry and ensuring high safety standards for its products; and
- by providing a single EU regulatory system with a streamlined decision making process and clear timelines.

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas has said: "REACH is currently the most ambitious chemicals legislation in the world and a marked improvement over the current situation. More information will be available about substances in everyday products and it is expected that most dangerous substances will be progressively substituted with safer alternatives. This will help improve citizens' health and avoid environmental damage. REACH will also encourage innovation in the chemicals industry and increase consumer confidence in their products". (18th December 2006)

What are the key components of REACH?

Registration

Under REACH, manufacturers and importers of chemicals in volumes of one tonne or more per year will have to register them with a new European Chemicals Agency, submitting information on hazardous properties, uses and safe ways of handling them in a Chemical Safety Report. They can use existing data and share data. The producers and importers will also have to pass this information to 'downstream users' – manufacturers that use these chemicals in their production processes.

Evaluation

Through evaluation, public authorities will check the Chemical Safety Reports. They can request more information or changes in safety measures if necessary. At this stage, they will also scrutinise all proposals to ensure that animal testing is kept to a minimum.

Authorisation

Selected substances will be subject to more in-depth scrutiny of their safety during authorisation by the European Commission. These include: CMRs (carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins), PBTs (persistent, bio accumulative and toxic substances), vPvBs (very persistent and very bio accumulative substances) and substances of equivalent concern that have irreversible serious effects on humans and the environment. Substances will be authorised for a specified time period and only for nominated uses. REACH requires an assessment of whether alternatives are available and, in certain cases, the carrying out of a socio-economic assessment.

European Chemicals Agency

As part of the planned reforms, the EU will also establish a European Chemicals Agency that will be located in Helsinki. Its purpose is to manage the technical, scientific and administrative aspects of REACH and to establish consistency across the EU.

What are the key milestones of REACH?

The following are approximate dates for some of the key developments in REACH Implementation:

1st June 2007	REACH legislation entered into force
1st June 2008	European Chemicals Agency established (expected) Pre-registration commences
1st December 2008	Pre-registration closes
1st December 2010	Registration closes for substances manufactured or imported in Europe above 1000 tonnes per year and substances of very high concern*
1st June 2013	Registration closes for substances manufactured or imported in Europe between 100 and 1000 tonnes per year
1st June 2018	Registration closes for substances manufactured or imported in Europe between 1 and 100 tonnes per year

* substances of very high concern CMR1, CMR2, PBT and vPvB classified substances

Preparing for REACH?

Preparations to implement REACH within Shell chemicals companies are well advanced. As registration of our products will require significant input of information on their uses and exposure potential, we will be working closely with our customers to secure REACH registration.

Where can I get further information on REACH?

For further information on REACH either speak to your regular business contact or use the 'contact us' facility at www.shell.com/chemicals

The following external links may also be helpful:

European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/echa/home_en.html

European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic) www.Cefic.be

European Association of Chemicals Distributors (FECC) www.fecc.org

Chemical Industries Association (CIA) www.cia.org.uk

CIA 'REACH Ready' www.reachready.co.uk

Verband der Chemischen Industries (VCI) – the German Chemical Industry Association www.vci.de

Vereniging van de Nederlandse Chemische Industrie (VNCI) the Dutch Chemical Industry Association www.vnci.nl

Union des Industries Chimiques (UIC) – the French Chemical Industry Association www.uic.fr

American Chemistry Council (ACC) www.americanchemistry.com

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