

REACH Ready Review

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Downstream users – the hidden victims of REACH?

The declared aim of REACH is to shift the burden of compliance from the authorities and the users of chemicals to manufacturers and importers. This suggests that chemicals users (downstream users), have little to worry about – how wrong can you be!

The basic duties of downstream users are clear – and set out in Title V of REACH. Users must liaise with manufacturers and importers, report uses not included in registrations, participate in the cascading and iteration of information, and take the precautions for risk management set out by their suppliers. Many firms are now well on the way towards establishing procedures to manage these duties.

But although this will discharge legal obligations it ignores the huge collateral impact of REACH on downstream users. In simple terms this impact has two elements: the damage to business continuity and damage from overreaction to the legislative challenge.

REACHReady experience indicates that the issue of product continuity is the greatest threat. We have heard examples of the huge impact which could result from the withdrawal of key substances by manufacturers and importers – substances which could be part of the product or essential to the production process.

How can this threat be managed? Some recommend analysing every chemical in the business and checking with suppliers that registration will cover the uses and supply will continue. And this is where there is a danger of overreaction, the supplier of the paint for the factory canteen is unlikely to cease supply as a result of REACH, and even if it did, alternatives are readily available.

So whilst a preliminary mapping of substances and initial liaison with suppliers is vital, we recommend a strict prioritisation of further effort. Users should concentrate on product critical substances, especially those from one or a few suppliers and those that have properties of concern. Resources should be focussed on these, and the risk of interruption to supply carefully assessed. It may be necessary to seek alternative supplies, to consider how a small manufacturer or importer can be supported in the registration task, or to initiate programmes for substitution. Only when product continuity is assured should work spread to other substances, and then again on a priority basis.

REACHReady has already provided help to subscribers in this area and we have a fund of practical experience to share through the Helpdesk or REACHStart.

*This article, authored by Bob Warner, is reproduced from **REACHReady Review** with the kind permission of REACHReady. It highlights the impact REACH will have on all levels of the supply chain and presents issues that Baytouch's **REACHsuite** IT solution has been specifically designed to address and help manage.*