

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



How to Improve Safe Handling of Chemical Products: Sartomer Company, Exton, Pennsylvania

The Chemical Safety Network is designed to share successful practices in implementation, risk communication, and data use. The projects detailed in the Chemical Safety Network are easily reproducible, low cost and promote partnership-building in the community. This fact sheet does not provide extensive information about a project. Rather, it is intended to help stakeholders generate ideas, identify tools and pinpoint funding sources for accident preparedness and prevention initiatives.

Program Overview

The proper handling of chemicals during their entire life-cycle, product stewardship, is key to chemical safety. Sartomer assesses a new or potential customer's or distributor's ability to handle hazardous products safely by reviewing their environmental, health and safety (EHS) practices and, if warranted, making recommendations for improvements. These reviews are conducted by sales personnel who prioritize customer visits based on the hazard of the product(s) purchased and the types of safety and environmental programs implemented by the customer.

Hazard Evaluation

Sartomer evaluates the overall hazard of its products by using a numerical rating system. Rankings are based on each product's acute health hazard, flammability hazard, reactivity hazard, chronic health hazard, and carcinogenicity hazard. "Category A" products, the products with the highest overall hazard, are considered first when prioritizing customer reviews. For example, customers that use or purchase "category A" products would go to the top of the evaluation list. Customers that participate in an industry-sponsored safety program would be given a lower priority on the evaluation schedule.

Customer Relations

Sartomer maintains a relationship with its customers and distributors by following a philosophy of "cradle-to-grave" product stewardship or product responsibility. Distributors are considered an extension of the Sartomer sales force and receive health, safety and environmental information and training on Sartomer products. Sartomer also maintains a relationship with its distributors' customers as part of the commitment to product stewardship.

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In addition, some Sartomer customers receive health, safety and environmental training at their site or at Sartomer headquarters. Sartomer personnel address specific customer questions or issues regarding the safety or environmental aspects of products. Sartomer's product stewards ensure that all customer issues are resolved.

Challenges

One challenge was to ensure that the product stewardship principles were adopted throughout the company, not just by the EH&S department. Sartomer resolved this challenge by designating business managers as product stewards and incorporating product stewardship responsibilities into various job functions throughout the company (e.g., sales, marketing, purchasing).

Sales and marketing personnel now include product safety in their discussions with customers and consider product safety issues when evaluating customers. Quarterly reviews between sales personnel and distributors now include EH&S/product safety as a key topic.

Tips

- \$ Allow all functions of your business to provide input at the beginning of a product stewardship program so they will "buy into" the process.
- \$ Integrate the new program into existing systems to avoid complexity and to gain wider acceptance and implementation of the program.
- \$ This customer/distributor program is something any company, including small businesses, can adopt if the company is willing and prepared to implement product stewardship throughout the organization.

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