

REACH *Case story*

REACH at a small enterprise



Jean François Chilles, Freudenberg Evolon's safety environmental and quality manager, had previously heard about REACH in various conversations, read articles on the draft legislation and received information from the French chemical industry federation. However, the concrete implications became clearer after attending a three-hour seminar for company managers in Strasbourg in December 2006.

The event was organised by the local Euro Info Centre, hosted by the city's

Chamber of Commerce and financed at up to 50% by the European Commission.

Mr Chilles himself is in charge of implementing the measures associated with REACH inside the company. This project was initiated in January 2007. To assist him in the exercise, he hired a trainee to research the information needed for his data base and to prepare the necessary groundwork.

How the small company tackled REACH

Freudenberg Nonwovens, the world's largest producer of nonwovens, belongs itself to the Freudenberg Group, an international family-owned company of German origin.

Freudenberg Evolon produces microfilament technical textiles and has 50 employees.

The company already had a comprehensive inventory of chemical substances which was updated annually. A particular challenge was to get more safety and environmental information about the hazardous substances used in the factory. While this is fairly straightforward for products

within the company, it is much more difficult for subcontracted items.

To ensure that the company meets the deadlines set by the legislation, Mr Chilles drew up a timetable, starting from the opening of the pre-registration period of 1 June 2008 and worked backwards, identifying the different elements that would need to be in place by that date.

In addition to external help from the Strasbourg chamber of commerce, Mr Chilles was supported by the parent company which had appointed someone with specific responsibility to coordinate operations for REACH since 2004. He also had to report regularly to the German headquarters on the progress he was making.

In April and May 2007, Mr Chilles wrote to all his suppliers asking them if they were aware of REACH and the obligations it introduces.

"One piece of advice I would give is to establish a comprehensive inventory of all the substances that come into and go out of your premises. That will give you a clear picture and is the basic starting point", Mr Chilles explains.

Other important lessons were to start early, have a clear timetable and know whom to turn to if you need help.