

Protecting shared interests

by Kevin Short

As you read throughout this edition of *The IAPD Magazine*, you'll notice that chemicals and plastics are forever linked. One simply makes the other possible. Without chemistry, there would be no plastics. But if it wasn't for plastics, the chemical industry would struggle with safety and efficiency. The similarities between these two worlds far outweigh the differences and at the center of it all (or to borrow a term from chemistry, the nucleus) is the environment.

The pressures the chemical industry has faced for decades are starting to impact our businesses and lives at an alarming rate. We may very well be at the tipping point where the regulation, if not also legislation, that has long been impacting chemistry is now poised to take a bite out of our apple. The following three examples pose particular threats.

Exhibit A — Bisphenol A. Search for BPA on the Internet and you'll get 2.3 million results. First produced in 1891 and used extensively in plastics manufacturing since 1957, this chemical compound thrived for 117 years before first coming under attack in 2008. Canada classified it as a toxic substance in September 2010. It took three short years to undo generations of BPA's generally accepted use. Right or wrong, fact or fiction, science or voodoo, BPA's story might just be the beginning of the vilification of certain compounds, leading the way to target other chemical building blocks that formulate plastics in the near future.

Exhibit B — RoHS. Otherwise known as the Restriction of the Use of Certain Hazardous Substances, this regulation was adopted by the European Union in February 2003. Three years later it was enacted and became law in many European countries. RoHS specifically targets six chemicals: lead (Pb), mercury (Hg), cadmium (Cd), hexavalent chromium (Cr6+), polybrominated biphenols (PBB) and polybrominated diphenyl ether (PBDE). Along with its counterpart, WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive), RoHS mandates the collection and recycling of systems that contain these six

substances. This affects IAPD members in two distinct ways: One, many of the plastics we produce and distribute have some of these six ingredients in them. Two, the directive applies to an entire system. In other words, if RoHS applies to a single component of a system and that system cannot be disassembled, the entire part is regulated.

Exhibit C — REACH. With an even more daunting acronym, the Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemical Substances launched in Europe in June 2007. Essentially, REACH puts the onus on the industries that manufacture and consume certain chemistries to self regulate, inform and move away from certain materials when other "safer" (not better) ones are available.

Your IAPD Environmental Committee and Board of Directors believe it is a question of when, not if, the North American version of exhibits A, B and C become realities that will affect our industry. The chemical industry in this country responded with Responsible Care in order to proactively address future regulation and legislation (for more information, visit www.responsiblecare.americanchemistry.com).

We believe product stewardship, active recycling and public outreach will all go a long way to protecting our plastics interests. ■

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