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How Chemical and Environmental Legislation gained Momentum

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand today's myriad regulations affecting chemicals, let's review some historical milestones, which have influenced recent legislative decisions. With the rise of the environmental movement during the 20th century, this era represents a major period for initiation & implementation of national chemical regulations towards human health protection such as:

- EU REACH (EC 1907/2006)
- European Chemical Association (ECHA; Helsinki, Finland, est. 2006)
- US-Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA; Washington, DC, est. 1970)
- Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA; est. 1999)

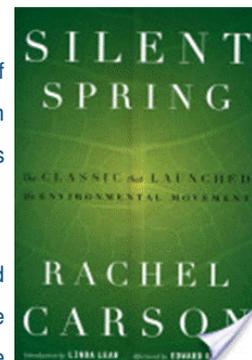
Other countries following suit:

- K-REACH (S. Korean legislation came into force on January 1, 2015)
- 'China REACH' (Chinese legislation came into force on October 15, 2010)

1962 Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist

Some suggest that Rachel Carson, who authored the book, 'Silent Spring' is the founder of the environmental movement. Her highly acclaimed book provided evidence that DDT, an effective insecticide was affecting the proper development of chicken eggshells; thus affecting the chicken's ability to properly replicate.

Although ridiculed by many industry leaders, Ms. Carson's book did get great reviews and made people aware about DDT, which was eventually banned from use. Many attribute Ms. Carson's efforts for founding the environmental movement and she received the prestigious US Medal of Freedom.



1976 Dioxin leakage, Seveso, Italy

In the summer of 1976, a small industrial facility released the highest known amount of the highly poisonous substance, Dioxin. The catastrophic accident in Seveso prompted the adoption of EU legislation on the prevention and control of such accidents. The so-called Seveso-Directive (Directive 82/501/EEC) was later amended in view of the lessons learned from later accidents such as Bhopal, India or Enschede, Netherlands resulting into Seveso-II (Directive 96/82/EC).



1978 Love Canal chemical site Niagara Falls, NY, USA

Named after William T. Love, the canal that he tried to build in the 1890s never truly came to fruition; however, whatever was built by Love was in the 1940s eventually used as a dumping site by the Hooker Chemical Co. (later owned by the Occidental Petroleum Corp.). Records show that approx. 22,000 tons from over 200 different chemicals were poured into the 'canal'.



With homes, a primary school and neighborhood in close contact to the dumpsite, a growing concern was lodged by the residents showing proof of an abnormal number of maladies (miscarriages, birth defects, cancers, nervous disorders and others) to this specific site. In 1970, under the Nixon administration, the EPA was established and as more medical problems were evolving at the site, President Jimmy Carter initiated the "Superfund", which prompted in 1978 the subsequent 'Love Canal Cleanup'. Today, all that remains in the area are abandoned homes and streets.

1984 Union Carbide gas leak Bhopal, India

In 1984 more than 3,000 people died from the effects of toxic gases, which leaked from this Union Carbide India Ltd. (UCIL-Bhopal) chemical facility. The accident happened in the early hours of the morning at this pesticide facility. Supposedly, methyl isocyanate gas (MIC) had escaped, when a valve in the plant's underground storage tank broke under pressure.



SUMMARY

As much as we gripe about regulations, nevertheless one can see the necessity to instill safety and compliance within the chemical sector; after all, many other industries have their regulations too! As CONUSBAT acts as a REACH OR, we also cooperate with our global partners on their respective national environmental legislation (i.e., China REACH, K-REACH, US-EPA/TSCA).

"When entering a new market, regulations shouldn't be considered a hindrance to business, but viewed as the entrance guidance to local or regional challenges!" Dr. Annelie Struessmann, Technical Regulatory Director, CONUSBAT

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