

To Vice-Presidents/Deans, Heads of Schools, HoFAs

From Dr Melanie Taylor

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cc Prof M Case, Dr S A Robson, Dr D Barker, I Jarvey, School Safety Representatives

Reference Safety Circular 1/2009

REACH – the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals

Action : HOSs are asked to ensure that all research staff and students are made aware of this circular and the implications for research programmes, and to feedback any concerns or issues either directly through their own supplier(s) with a copy to the Safety Office, or to the University Safety Advisor who will co-ordinate responses.

These European Regulations are being introduced over an 11 year period which started from July 2007. They represent a complete overhaul and rationalisation of the way in which all chemicals are assessed and supplied, and are long and complex. Background information and further explanation is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/reach/index.htm>, http://echa.europa.eu/reach_en.asp and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/chemicals/reach/index.htm>

In terms of compliance, the main burden will fall on manufacturers and suppliers but there are some duties on "downstream users" (DUs). DUs will also have to respond to changes in the way in which health & safety information is provided by suppliers, and to use the substance in accordance with the supplier's exposure scenario(s). The Safety Office and the Purchasing Office have been liaising with the University's main suppliers of chemicals, to obtain information about the foreseeable impacts on our activities. Initial responses suggest that they intend to support their entire inventory through the process, and will include some form of generic descriptor for use of substances in (lab bench scale) research and teaching processes. However, commercial considerations will become clearer over time, and we do not yet know how detailed these scenarios will need to be.

Almost 38,000 chemicals have now been put forward by suppliers for "pre-registration" - a procedure which gives them the benefit of a longer deadline to complete the registration process. DUs are being encouraged to check the list and ensure substances they use are included. The list is at <http://apps.echa.europa.eu/preregistered/pre-registered-sub.aspx> You will need the CAS or EU number to use the search engine.

Please note : any substance not on this list cannot be manufactured or supplied in the EU until a full registration dossier is submitted and the relevant fee paid by the supplier. If substances are imported directly by staff or students at the University, those individuals will assume responsibility for complying with the supplier's legal duties.

There is also a published list of candidate substances for the stringent authorisation procedure, at http://echa.europa.eu/chem_data/candidate_list_table_en.asp

In addition, a list has been published of 267 substances of “very high concern” usually for reasons of biopersistence and/or toxicity. The broad intention is that these substances will eventually be phased out completely (with very few, if any, exemptions). This so-called REACH-SIN (substitute it now) list is at www.chemsec.org/list/ and includes many substances in common usage across the campus.

At present, the timescales and rate at which these substances will become unavailable are unknown, and early indications from the Health & Safety Executive were that they would be tackled in relatively small batches (12-15 pa). Nevertheless, researchers depending on any of these substances would be advised to start looking for alternatives, or preparing to make detailed cases to the EU or their supplier about why exceptions should be made. There is a great deal of political pressure in favour of eliminating these substances of very high concern, and representations, even for the best of reasons, are by no means guaranteed success.

Dr Melanie Taylor
University Safety Advisor