

The Biodiversity Action Plans submitted by Huntsman are aimed at improving habitat potential and include specialised monitoring techniques to assess the impact of the waste water outflows on the local marine ecology surrounding a number of European sites. Work features a strong outreach element, often involving local conservation groups and volunteers. The judges praised this “substantial effort” and “long-term commitment”.

Similarly, in Scotland, ExxonMobil's Fife ethylene plant has established a successful wildlife habitat project which today involves many partners, including environmental and conservation groups together with no fewer than 44 local primary schools. The project illustrates how biodiversity conservation can be successfully balanced with economic development through careful management of environmental impacts, says ExxonMobil.

Product stewardship

Rhodia's broad risk management initiative on CMR (carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction) substances involves a life cycle approach that judges praised for being “highly transparent” with data available to employees, customers, suppliers and neighbouring populations. Some 99% of CMR risk assessments are complete and 97% of dossiers finalized, and in the five years to 2009 the number of CMR substances used or marketed has gone from 20 to seven. Among future actions, Rhodia is working with customers to seek substitutes for the CMR substances they use.

AkzoNobel Industrial Chemicals, the leading supplier of vacuum salt for the chemical transformation market and an important supplier of road salt, outlined its successful search for an alternative to the salt anti-caking agent ferro cyanide. The new product was commended for combining improvements in efficiency and environmental impact.

Health & safety

Health and safety remain at the core of many chemical companies' – and increasingly their partners' – Responsible Care programmes, and have been the focus of numerous projects submitted to the Cefic awards scheme since its launch. This year was no exception as companies showcased their efforts which ranged from tried and tested Behaviour Based Safety (BBS) Programmes to global information systems, and specially developed tools for the logistics sector.

Solvay's entry highlights a pioneering project in occupational health management, Medexis (Medical and Exposure Information System). Supported by a global information system that interlinks the information used by occupational physicians and hygienists, it enables a medical follow-up tailored to individual risks and individual employees. Medexis functions in the SAP environment and can be used by other companies and in other industries.

BASF submitted two entries, its 2nd global health campaign “Steps to Health” and its “Safety Champions” campaign which seeks further improvement to safety statistics that are already at an historic low. The company is meeting the challenge through development of innovative tools combined with essential elements: visible leadership, individual responsibility, open dialogue and employee involvement.

Similar attributes were required for a site-specific project where Schering-Plough tackled a shortfall in performance at Brinny in Ireland through implementation of a “Target Zero” HSE improvement programme that reduced 2009 injury rates by 70% on 2007 and '08 levels.

European Chemical Transport Association (ECTA) member and new Responsible Care signatory Talke Group has achieved significant improvements in its safety record through BBS which has now been extended from its professional drivers to cover employees in cleaning stations, workshops and warehouses. And, with a partner, it developed an innovative system for preventing falls in cleaning stations which will be installed company-wide by Q3 2010.

Other logistics-related safety schemes were submitted by Shell Chemical with development of a low-cost Truck Rollover Warning Device (RWD), and by DHL Supply Chain Industrial UK where a concerted and comprehensive safety programme has reduced its Injury Frequency Rate (IFR) by 70% since 2005. DHL also highlighted CSR activities including successes in its young offenders programme and Truck And Child Safety campaign. Shell's action was in response to an increase in truck rollovers – the RWD is not only cheap but quick and easy to retrofit. Positive feedback has resulted in a wider rollout to other chemical producers, transport companies and truck manufacturers. The judges described it as an “outstanding project to improve transport safety” and an “intelligent tool”.

At Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ireland, BBS also came into play for its Safe Start programme which, together with existing safety management systems, helped reduce the accident frequency rate by 84% to 0.25 over the past four years. Like other schemes, good communication and employee buy-in are essential for success – more than 30% of its employees are involved in an EHS Team.

Teijin Aramid's safety campaign, too, focused on behaviour by making use of film in which employees described accidents they experienced and their impact, an approach that had a strong impression on colleagues. Film was also used to communicate a second phase during which employees from various locations took a closer look at how safety is approached by the company and shared findings; the company adopted “an open and non-protective position throughout the process”.

Praised for impressive results and an example of ‘what everyone should be doing’, Sabic Innovative Plastics highlights the effectiveness of a relatively simple concept to substantially improve the EHS performance of its Bergen op Zoom, Netherlands, site involving “passionate leaders and high employee engagement with creativity and teamwork”.