

President's Message

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in 2004 published "Corporate Social Responsibility and Safety and Health at Work" (http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/reports/210/csr_report_en_en.pdf).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been defined as the integration of social and environmental concerns in an organisation's operations and their interaction with stakeholders. To be socially responsible, an organisation has to go beyond fulfilling its legal expectations. It also means investing 'more' in human capital, the environment and its relations with stakeholders.

CSR is not a new concept. It has recently come to the fore because of an increased interest and sensitivity to organisational environmental and ethical issues in the community. Examples include corporate financial failures, environmental damage, improper treatment of workers, and serious plant accidents that impact the community. Process industry incidents include Bhopal (the 21st anniversary is about now), the Toulouse incident (occurred just after 9/11 and killed 29 people) and most recently the Jilin incident. Not all incidents are acute. Chronic issues such as global warming are also seen to be linked to CSR.

Safe working conditions, good worker health and minimal impact to the environment belong to the social responsibilities of companies and can be regarded as an integral part of CSR. For any company, including chemical companies, this includes the

SH&E performance at all their sites globally and also in their supply chains.

CSR is also linked to sustainable development. In the process industries this involves the newly emerging disciplines of green chemistry and green engineering.

CSR is not agreed by everyone to be the correct role of profit making enterprises. One notable critic is the Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman. However there is a sufficient mass of supporters of CSR that a company needs to pay more than lip service to be perceived as being a good corporate citizen. One example is the ethical investment funds that only invest in companies that pass tests of ethical, socially responsible and environmentally responsible behaviour. In response to these concerns many organisations are now preparing annual CSR reports.

Whatever your opinion of CSR may be; CSR will not go away. Ensuring your organisation has a sound SH&E policy and programmes that could be shared with the world at large will help your organisation meet future CSR requirements.

Reading the European Agency report will help you understand the drivers your organisation and you are facing.

