

HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD

Winner: Bitrez

Formulating products to allow customers base to continue to operate within necessary new restrictions.

Bitrez leads the field in the markets in which the company operates due to its ability to develop innovative products that offer compliance with ever more stringent regulatory demands.

The drive for reduction or elimination of a specific substance, generally results from scientific findings and resultant changes in the classification or threshold limit that impacts on the welfare of consumers and/or the environment. Of course, it can also be brought about by media perception and pressure that ultimately necessitates changes to formulas to satisfy either demand. Irrespective of the origin the need to stay on top of requirements is essential. Increasing sensitivity of analytical equipment and the ability to detect and determine very low levels of material coupled with improved understanding of the effects of chemical exposure has brought about increased restriction and a reduction to the threshold limits.

There is no greater example of when in 2016, Bitrez generated low free formaldehyde CURAPHEN phenolic resins to support industry as a result of the United Nations mandating the Global Harmonised System (GHS) of product labelling and the classification changes that ensued. All over the world there were different laws on how to identify the hazardous properties of chemicals (called 'classification') and how information about these hazards is then passed to users (through labels and safety data sheets for workers). This can be confusing because the same chemical can have different hazard descriptions in different countries.

For example, a chemical could be labelled as 'toxic' in one country but not in another. This also acts as a barrier to international trade. The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the World Summit held in Johannesburg in 2002 recognised this as an important global issue. Given the expanding international market in chemical substances and mixtures, to help protect people and the environment, and to facilitate trade, the United Nations developed a 'Globally Harmonised System' (GHS) on classification and labelling.

The GHS is a single worldwide system for classifying and communicating the hazardous properties of industrial and consumer chemicals. GHS sits alongside the UN 'Transport of Dangerous Goods' system. The CLP (classification, labelling and packaging) Regulation adopts the GHS throughout the member states of the European Union. European Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures came into force on 20 January 2009 in all EU Member States, including the UK. It is known by its abbreviated form, 'the CLP Regulation' or just plain 'CLP'.

Together, when coupled with REACH (the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) regulations, this brought about new threshold limits regarding toxicity to which the markets had to adapt, but the Bitrez formulated products that allowed the customer base to continue to operate within the necessary restrictions.

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