

# **Toxicological Information- und Data Network - A European Challenge?**

**Workshop, Berlin 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2002**

## **Managing Product Data for Poisons Information in Austria**

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### ***Introduction:***

Since the foundation of the Austrian Poisons Information Centre (PIC) in 1973, a continuous cooperation with chemical and pharmaceutical industry has been maintained in order to collect pertinent data on products of all different kinds. Certainly, the way of the working process to achieve this has changed in many aspects during the years.

### ***Historical development:***

In the beginning, the selection of chemical products used in households and in industry was limited and the data set was easily manageable. Then, industrial companies were asked to send information on the composition of their products. Most of the manufacturers submitted their formulations voluntarily either on a routine basis or on demand. As to pharmaceuticals, companies at all times provided the center with pharmacological and toxicological data in addition to the obligatory safety files. Of course, all information was sent by post or later also by fax. By collecting all the paper sheets during the decades, an extensive archive has been accumulated. Understandably, the data collection became very impracticable and finally, impossible to administer. Especially, in terms of accessibility, this mode of collecting and storing data became more and more unacceptable, for the time needed to retrieve toxicological data had become too lengthy when quick action was required.

### ***Present status:***

- **Data collection:**  
Manufacturers and trade companies of chemical products are asked to send their product data in an electronic format either using their already existing safety data sheets or any other document stating information about the composition. Since the year 2000 manufacturers of dangerous chemical products are legally obliged to convey their respective safety data sheets to the responsible authority which is the Austrian Federal Environment Agency. The original regulation, to forward these data sheets to the PIC was not put into effect from practical reasons. The direct way from industry to the PIC had turned out to be the most reliable and efficient one. Mostly, the data are transferred by email. In some cases electronic media such as CD-Roms or diskettes are used which arrive with the regular post service. Some manufacturers make their product safety data available on their internet sites from where they can be obtained.

- **Storage and recovering data:**  
After their delivery, files are converted into the PDF format and stored in a data base. From there, individual products can be searched easily by their brand name and found quickly. The software used for these purposes is the commercially available ADOBE ACROBAT.
- **Updating:**  
Due to the high turn over on the market constantly producing new articles with increasing speed, a thorough updating of the data base is necessary. However, its realization depends on the cooperation and willingness of the industry who must keep the centre constantly informed about current changes regarding products or product formulations. Fortunately, there is a close cooperation between the PIC and the Chemicals Department of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce since many years supporting every effort to increase product safety and consumers protection.
- **Future planning:**  
In order to more efficiently manage the increasing number of files new computer technologies are tested which enable the information staff at the centre not only to find chemical products quickly but also to identify them safely among the enormous variety on the market. Potent search engines have to be installed which help to screen the internet and the local data bases likewise in a single operation. This is mandatory for providing poisons information which meets all modern requirements.