

California's green chemistry goals promise tougher regulations

By Guy Montague-Jones of Cosmetic Design Europe

Feb/5/2008 - California could develop tough and comprehensive regulations for cosmetics under the proposals of the Green Chemistry Initiative.

The significance of the Californian market means that cosmetics companies operating in the US will have to adapt their procedures and practices to comply with tighter legislation.

The Department of [Toxic](#) Substances Control has unveiled various goals related to the elimination of toxic chemicals along with options as to how best to achieve them.

The suggestions are to be reviewed by stakeholders before detailed recommendations are sent to the Governor in July with the broad aim of moving from the management of hazardous materials to their elimination.

Among the stated aims of the initiative are stronger consumer protection laws, more comprehensive information on chemicals and closer relations with partners in the EU and Canada.

Comprehensive regulatory system

In recent years chemical bills have been passed into law addressing narrow areas such as the cosmetics legislation in 2005 related to ingredients that cause cancer or birth defects.

This patchwork quilt of [regulation](#) in [California](#) will soon be replaced under the Green Chemistry Initiative by a comprehensive system although its precise form has yet to be decided upon.

YG Laboratories president and UC Berkley lecturer, Rebecca Gadberry said: *"The 2005 act was written with more passion than accuracy."*

She said the Green Chemistry Initiative was on the other hand a real attempt to involve all stakeholders in the creation of comprehensive regulations, guidance and information to ensure consumer safety.

The realization of this goal seems likely to take Californian regulations far beyond Federal requirements and demand significant changes in manufacturing practice.

Information and training

Another of the important recommendations is the collection of more accurate and comprehensive information regarding chemical properties and uses.

The report stated that this will enable businesses to identify hazardous chemicals, government agencies to regulate their use and people to make informed buying decisions.

Related to the quest for greater information is the aim of forging closer ties with EU and Canada in order to share knowledge and expertise.

The use of the domestic substances list generated under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1999 in the development of REACH in the EU was given as an example of the benefits of cross border information sharing.

Access to a detailed bank of chemical information is a necessary step towards achieving the central objective of the Green Chemistry Initiative- the elimination of toxic materials from the entire product life cycle.

However information is useless without people being capable of interpreting it, which leads to another key element of the initiative - the training of a new generation of scientists to deliver the technical advancements demanded by green chemistry.

Overall the Californian proposals intend to go beyond regulation and rules in order to prevent exposure to chemical toxins, which is currently costing the state \$2.6bn a year in medical bills and lost wages according to research carried out at UC Berkeley and UCLA.

"The proposed changes in California are comparable to REACH in the EU although they are far broader and will provide more guidance to consumers and businesses alike," added Gadberry.