



How to Maintain Community Confidence: Eastman Kodak Company, Kodak Park, Rochester, N.Y.

The Chemical Safety Network is designed to share successful practices in implementation, risk communication, and data use. The projects detailed in the Chemical Safety Network are easily reproducible, low cost and promote partnership-building in the community. This factsheet does not provide extensive information about a project. Rather, it is intended to help stakeholders generate ideas, identify tools and pinpoint funding sources for accident preparedness and prevention initiatives.

Background

Kodak Park, in Rochester, N.Y., is Eastman Kodak's largest manufacturing complex. The site is located in the midst of a highly-urbanized area that includes thousands of households and businesses. Over the years, eliminating the use of some highly hazardous substances, substituting less hazardous materials, and reducing the storage or use of hazardous materials has significantly reduced potential chemical hazards at the site. As a result, the company's Risk Management Plan covered only two processes - one involving a formaldehyde storage tank and the other involving a storage tank of highly flammable vinylidene chloride. The RMP also required the facility to report on the "worst case" impact to neighboring communities for these two chemicals. Worst-case scenario reporting had the potential to be a community relations nightmare. However, actions taken prior to 1999 had minimized or eliminated risks from handling or storage of chemicals.

Public Outreach

Five times a year, the company mails a newsletter to approximately 13,500 plant neighbors and 10,000 employees that includes information about developments at the facility. Additionally, a staffed on-site Neighborhood Information Center is open Monday through Friday to anyone seeking information about Kodak Park-related issues. At the center, the public can obtain information such as material safety data sheets, risk management plans and other health and safety-related information. Community residents also can ask one of the center's staff to give further explanation or answer questions about chemical hazards.

Citizens also can call a 24-hour hotline to voice concerns about plant operations. A Community Advisory Council, with members representing local government, local schools, plant neighbors, and special interest groups meets monthly to discuss issues raised by the community and other topics suggested by plant personnel.

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Challenges

Kodak identified the following challenges:

- High profile company in the community;
- Active local public advocacy groups; and
- How to demonstrate the two “Ps -prevention and preparedness” in the context of RMP.

Results

Outreach helped Kodak Park retain a high level of community support - an annual survey of neighbors showed that 95% agreed the company was an asset to the community, while 89% agreed that the facility cooperated with government to insure health and safety. Despite the absence of community concerns, the company eliminated any off-site impact from worst-case scenario releases covered under RMP. This was accomplished by installing improved containment capabilities at a chemical handling facility.

Budget

Kodak Park has an annual \$100,000 budget for community relations activities, such as the newsletter, community survey, public meetings, and citizen advisory council.

Tips For Enhancing Community Relations

Kodak Park suggests the following tips:

- Know your public: plant employees, other industries, local safety personnel, media, government officials, neighborhood groups and other interested individuals, school, hospitals, and nursing homes.
- Communicate early and often! Key messages should be clear and concise and come directly from you to avoid “filtering” by others.
- Tell the public what you are doing to prevent accidents and how you are prepared to handle emergencies that do occur.
- Develop a system for keeping the public routinely informed about plant operations.
- Participate in community activities.
- Utilize newsletters, letters, brochures, meetings, and open houses to get your message out.
- Develop a mechanism to get citizen feedback.

For more information, contact ...

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