

## Safety programme

Over 20,000 European companies use diisocyanates and associated chemicals in their activities. Industry estimates suggest that the work of about 800,000 people relates to the use of these raw materials. Due to the potentially hazardous nature of diisocyanates and other chemicals used by the

polyurethanes industry, the member companies of ISOPA (the European Diisocyanate and Polyol Producers Association) have launched a proactive, industry-wide initiative to promote a culture of continuous improvement in product stewardship, in particular the safe handling of diisocyanates..

Entitled Walk the Talk , the initiative aims to improve health and safety standards across the polyurethanes industry in the 25 countries in the European Union by raising awareness and increasing understanding of best practice for handling these chemicals.

Most accidents in the factory happen because of behaviour rather than to the products, equipment or procedures in use. The safety programme

aims to achieve a significant reduction in workplace accidents by having representatives of companies engaged in active dialogue on safety behaviour with workers and managers.

The initiative's objective is to improve health and safety standards across the European polyurethanes industry by raising awareness and increasing understanding of best practice. In turn, this should lead to a positive change in behaviour and a significant reduction in the number of accidents in the workplace.

Drawing on the experience of member companies and their customers, Isopa has established a series of recommendations for safely using the polyurethane chemicals and how to act in an emergency. Every programme will be tailored to individual needs depending on the type of materials you handle.

Core modules have been created for MDI, TDI and auxiliary materials and address: physical and chemical properties of the material, the effect the chemical may have on health, examples of unsafe and safe behaviour, good personal hygiene in the workplace, cleanliness and safety in the workplace, good ventilation, how to use the personal protective equipment correctly, dealing with spillages, first aid equipment, emergency procedures in case of exposure to the chemical or to fire.

Despite an excellent track record, accidents, some involving injuries, still occur because of improper handling of diisocyanates and polyols. Greater awareness, better communications and continuous training will promote safety-conscious behaviour and prepare the industry for the implication of Reach, the new EU regulatory regime for chemicals

Polyurethanes are widely used to make thermal insulation, automotive interiors, furniture, bedding, footwear, paints and coatings. Combating accident risks is not only a matter of responsible business behaviour, it supports the competitiveness of the polyurethanes industry in a climate of increasing global competition.



ISOPA