

# The Seveso II Directive. A new step in the management of large risks

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The regulations which are concerned with the safety of industrial facilities should be fully embraced by the insurance sector as their correct enforcement affects both the knowledge of the risks and the provision of better safety conditions which improve the insurability of these risks. This is even more true when these regulations are applicable to facilities with a high potential risk level, as is the case of Directive 96/82/CE of December 1996 concerning the control of risks inherent in serious accidents involving hazardous substances, better known as the Seveso II directive.

After more than 10 years of experience when it was applied in the industrial sector in the European Union, Directive 82/501/CEE concerning the risks inherent in serious accidents in certain industrial activities, known as Seveso I, has given

rise to a new directive known as Seveso II. This new directive incorporates knowledge gained from the analysis of serious accidents and the technological advances which have occurred during this period of time.

The reader will remember that during the period of time in which the Seveso directive was in force there were various very relevant large accidents which had impact on the recent history of industrial safety: San Juan de luxatec, Bhopal, etc.

The main objectives of the Seveso II directive continue to consolidate and update the objectives of the previous directive: to provide a high level of protection to safeguard the safety of citizens and protect the environment.

There follow the main points and new features which are included in Seveso II.

The newest technical aspect, although the most rigorous application of Seveso I also made this obvious, is the appearance and reinforcement of the “domino effect” as a factor to be taken into consideration in safety studies, in other words, the formalisation of the need to identify and evaluate possible chain accidents amongst facilities or groups of facilities in which the occurrence of a serious accident may have multiplied effects due to the proximity of vulnerable installations which could potentially generate secondary accidents with potentially more serious consequences than the initiating accident.

A single system is given based on the quantities of chemical substances used in processes or in storage for all facilities in which they are present. This is a fundamental change which broadens the field of application of the previous directive due to the fact that this was based on a binary quantity-activity sys-

tem. This meant that certain activities existed which, due to the fact that they were not included in the list of activities regulated by the directive, were not affected by the directive despite the fact that they used hazardous substances.

Another very important new aspect to the Seveso II directive, and which will cause the affected installations to make great efforts, is the preparation by industry of a policy for the prevention of serious accidents which guarantees a high level of protection through a management system designed and set up with this in mind. This management system should include the organisational structure, responsibilities, the practices and procedures and the resources which allow the policy for the prevention of serious accidents to be implemented.

In the area of public government, the Seveso II directive includes regulations concerning land on which new installations are authorised, and also for the control of urban development in the areas surrounding existing installations which would be affected.

The need to inform the public, as set out in the present Directive has been carried out in a very uneven fashion in the member countries. The Seveso II directive increases the information which must be made available to the public. There are sure to be a considerable number of difficulties in this matter given the sensitivity of the information involved and its absolute necessity for the setting up of exterior emergency plans for the affected installations.

The new directive includes very precise criteria for the notification of accidents according to various factors: substances involved, human injury, etc.

The Seveso II directive was published in DOCE on January 14, 1997.