Conference Report

NEWMOA holds toxics use reduction conference

Thomas W. Joyce
Research and Development Editor, *Tappi Journal*

The Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA) sponsored a conference March 28 on Reducing the Use of Toxic Chemicals in Pulp and Paper Manufacture. Conference organizer Terri Goldberg, pollution prevention manager for NEWMOA, said the meeting's purpose was to begin a dialogue on toxics use reduction (TUR) in the pulp and paper industry. The basic premise of TUR is that by reducing the amount of toxic compounds used in the manufacturing process, the discharge of toxic pollutants can be reduced if not eliminated.

The meeting in Durham, N.H., was attended by 75 representatives from industry, government, and education, and public policy organizations.

Robert Pojasek, vice president of Geraghty and Miller, Boston, Mass., said that TUR programs are being implemented in many industries. Perceptive management is now making pollution prevention an integral part of the company's total quality management program. Besides increasing management and worker awareness of environmental problems, other benefits include reduced operating costs, lower manufacturing overhead, reduced liability exposure, and lower costs of environmental compliance. Pojasek pointed out that TUR is an ongoing process: As the economic situations and technical capabilities change, what was once not feasible becomes feasible. He predicted that all companies will shortly have TUR programs because it is much easier to reduce pollution discharge by avoidance rather than treatment.

The remainder of the morning was filled with concurrent presentations on reducing the use of chlorine in the bleaching process, examples of how TUR programs were developed at several New England paper mills, and methods for assessing the full costs and savings associated with TUR programs.

Julie Belaga, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 1 administrator, discussed the new way of doing business at EPA. The emphasis is on cooperation with industry to achieve the nation's goal of reduced discharge of toxic compounds. Toxics use reduction must play a major role in pollution control for the foreseeable future, she asserted. It is a concept whose time has come, and it is now up to industry to take advantage of all potential benefits. If requested, the EPA is willing to assist paper companies in their TUR programs, she said.

The afternoon sessions began with presentations by government officials from several Region 1 states on how pollution prevention is being implemented at the state level. The states apparently are now taking the lead from the EPA and gearing up for major pollution prevention efforts.

Hank Schilling, U.S. EPA associate assistant administrator for policy, planning, and evaluation, pointed out that the paper industry is the fourth largest industrial emitter of toxics; it ranks first in chloroform emissions and is also a significant emitter of toluene (from coating applications). Paper companies should begin TUR programs because the EPA probably will promote pollution prevention rather than end-of-the-pipe treatment, he said. The preferred hierarchy of control technology is source reduction, recycling, and then effluent treatment.

Dwight Peavey, toxic release coordinator for EPA Region 1, said an EPA goal was 33/50; that is, a 33% reduction in toxics released by 1992 and a 50% reduction by 1995. This goal is only for 17 high-priority chemicals, including chloroform and toluene which are of particular interest to the paper industry. Although the 33/50 program is totally voluntary, he urged paper companies to begin TUR programs now, particularly with the new spirit of cooperation within EPA.

Stan Eller from the Natural Resource Council of Maine next spoke of the importance of involving workers in TUR programs. He predicted that TUR may be the last opportunity for labor and management to reduce workplace health hazards in a cooperative manner. Richard Youngstrom, an industrial hygienist, gave several examples of how TUR programs could be applied and also discussed some of the pitfalls.

The conference ended with an open discussion of how to begin TUR programs in paper companies. A chief concern of the industry representatives was the poor image the paper companies seem to have in respect to environmental matters, despite having made giant strides in pollution control.

Conference organizer Goldberg said this was the first attempt to bring several groups together to discuss TUR. Before it becomes commonplace in paper companies, the benefits of implementing TUR and procedures for beginning a TUR program will have to be better understood. For more information, contact: Terri Goldberg, NEWMOA, 85 Merrimac St., Boston, MA 02114, telephone (617) 367-8558. □