

# Responsible Action pays off

**RESPONSIBLE CARE** – Utilizing the Responsible Care principles, participants in the chemicals supply chain automatically safeguard people's health and the environment. And soon collect the dividends on their commitment. BY ANDREAS RIEM

The Responsible Care programme initiated by the Canadian Chemical Producers Association (CCPA) in 1985 is now open to logistics service providers in the chemical and petrochemical industry. Participation in the Responsible Care programme was for many years only open to manufacturers and distributors in the industry, but this situation changed at the end of 2008.

The umbrella organisation ECTA (European Chemical Transport Association), then met in Manchester (UK) to sign the declaration of support for Responsible Care, thus opening the way for ECTA members to also become actively involved in the Responsible Care programme. On February 13, to mark ECTA's 10. birthday, nineteen logistics providers signed the Declaration of Support for the Responsible Care Global Charter in Barcelona.

Through the implementation of Responsible Care, more wants to be achieved: more safety, more quality and more environmental and health protection. To many, this may sound like just more costs.

As a chemical logistics company, TALKE Logistic Services also had to address the implications of Responsible Care. Would the effort be worthwhile to be able to talk at eye level with the chemical and petrochemical industry, or to provide better public reporting of the progress made?

## The earlier one reacts, the sooner he benefits

TALKE Logistic Services, a company that has already played a pioneer role with the early introduction of ISO certification and SQAS assessments, did not take long to make up their mind. Certification, assessments and training programmes such as BBS (Behaviour Based Safety) and KPI

evaluations for the regular appraisal and constant improvement of performance, have been successfully used for many years. The implementation of Responsible Care therefore raised no controversial issues and the additional costs were correspondingly minimal.

Klaus Wessing, Director Transport Division, took on the role of Responsible Care Coordinator at TALKE: „On close inspection, Responsible Care does not involve any fundamental changes for TALKE. The standards for ourselves and our output had already been set at a very high level – certainly well above the industry norm. This commitment is now paying dividends.“

One of TALKE's concrete initiatives, which will contribute to more than just improving the company's 'green' credentials, includes investing only in the latest generation of vehicles. The first vehicles with modern AdBlue technology were ordered back in 2005, and today almost the entire TALKE fleet is made up of Euro 5 class vehicles. Higher acquisition costs are offset during the vehicle's working life cycle through tax relief and savings on toll charges.

Further measures include the installation of district heating for warm water and heating at the cleaning plant in Huerth, and the natural recycling of rainwater through filtration trenches as well as use of recovered water for cleaning forklift trucks and vehicles.

Besides investments in modern technology, spending on safety measures also brings financial advantages. Newly designed fall protection work platforms in the TALKE cleaning plant in Stade enable employees to work more freely and effectively. In addition to the safety benefits, productivity at the facility has also been significantly increased.

## Importance of Human Factor

In Responsible Care, as in all systems, the human factor must not be underestimated. Modern tech-

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nology, such as obstacle detection and collision avoidance, cannot be effective if drivers do not know how to use it.

For this reason, it is important to give employees thorough and timely training, stresses Wessing: „Obviously, it is simply not enough just to purchase modern vehicles. Only a well-trained driver can use his skills to cut back on fuel consumption and thereby produce lower emissions – and through good road sense and anticipation keep himself out of dangerous situations. So that is one more good reason for our commitment to education and advanced training for our employees in the transport fleet. Behaviour Based Safety is a very important aspect for us too. Here, drivers are given one-to-one, hands-on training focussing specifically on safety matters and also advanced training in routine operations.“

### More than a management issue

Personal involvement in Responsible Care by the employees at TALKE is actively encouraged. They can contribute their ideas to the company's 'MyIdea' sugges-



tion scheme that now considers suggestions not just from a commercial point of view.

Wessing: „The Responsible Care initiative concerns each and every TALKE Group employee and is by no means simply a matter for management. It is not just family men in senior positions who have a personal interest in seeing their children grow up in an unspoiled world worth living in. One way in which all TALKE employees can make a contribution is to use the company's 'MyIdea' suggestion scheme. In the past, we have received some really good suggestions that at the time we saw 'merely' as potential cost-saving measures. Now, with the implementation of Responsible Care, they are being seen in a quite different light.“

Even though the foundations were laid early for TALKE's activities in Responsible Care, there

is no room for complacency. „We will continue to refine our processes and to scrutinise even more closely the effect our work will have on future generations,“ says Klaus Wessing in conclusion.

TALKE exemplifies that Responsible Care is not only an instrument for the long-term safeguarding of the human race and the environment, but that proactive companies can also reap benefits from working with Responsible Care. ■

Modern Euro 5 class vehicles (top), the rainwater filtration trench at the TALKE logistics centre in Schwarzheide (left) and the installation of district heating to heat the water in the TALKE cleaning plant in Hürth (right) are all examples of measures consistent with the Responsible Care approach.

