

Industrial major-accidents: hazard control, dangerous substances

2001/0257(COD) - 10/12/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To amend and update Council Directive 96/82/EC on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances/ Seveso II. **CONTENT:** The so-called Seveso II Directive was agreed in 1996 in order to prevent major accidents involving dangerous substances, whilst at the same time limiting the consequences of such accidents on man and the environment. Essential to the proper functioning of the Seveso II Directive is the obligation for industrial operators to put into effect Safety Management Systems including a detailed risk assessment using possible accident scenarios. Recent, large-scale accidents involving dangerous substances suggest that a revision of the Directive is needed in order to broaden its provisions in line with current realities. The fireworks explosion in Enschede/the Netherlands and the industrial leaking of cyanide in Baia Mare/Romania combined with a similar accident in Aznalcollar /Spain in 1998 have alerted the Commission to certain short-comings in the Directive as it stands. Since Seveso II dealt mainly with chemical plants and storage facilities, both pyrotechnics/explosions and mining waste had previously been excluded from the scope of the 1996 Directive. In terms of the mining industry, the proposed revision would mean that certain activities of the extractive industries, including tailings disposal facilities, would fall under the breadth of the Directive. In substance the amendments would mean that operators who bring dangerous substances onto a mining or quarrying site in sufficient quantities will in the future come under the Directive's provisions. Industrial operators performing these activities will be obliged to put into effect Safety Management Systems, including a detailed risk assessment on the basis of possible accident scenarios. Concerning explosions and pyrotechnics, the proposal aims to offer an improved definition of both. Essentially, the proposed amendments seek to revise the definitions currently in Annex I Part 2 in order to reflect the hazards of different types of explosives. Importantly, the UN/ADR classification system of explosions and pyrotechnics will be introduced to the Seveso II Directive. In addition to amending Seveso II to take account of mining and pyrotechnic activities the proposal also seeks to offer amendments relating to carcinogens and substances dangerous for the environment. More carcinogenic substances will be included in the Directive whilst at the same time lowering the qualifying quantities for certain substances.