Control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances. Seveso II

1994/0014(SYN) - 23/11/1994

The Committee adopted the draft report on a council proposal amending and replacing the Directive 82 /501/EEC of 24 June 1982, commonly known as the 'Seveso' Directive. This directive was introduced in response to several major accidents as in Seveso in 1976. There also are 2 amending directives, 87/261 /EEC and 88/610/EEC. This proposal is a more fundamental overhaul of the directive in the light of a decade's experience with the legislation. Some 70 incidents classified as 'major' accidents were reported under the Directive between 1982-1990 and an official analysis concluded that about 95% of these could have been prevented by the application of existing knowledge and proper management and operational procedures. The EU-wide total of major accidents has now increased to about 130. Rapporteur BOWE's amendments do not wish to significantly change the Commission's proposal for a directive. Said the rapporteur: "My amendments seek to ensure a proper involvement and training for workers, to involve local communities and to give them a say in the permitting process, a role for the European Environment Agency and clear criteria for reporting of accidents to avoid under reporting or neglect". There is a new emphasis on safety management systems based on the lessons learnt from recent major accidents. These new provisions include: - safety audits to be carried out as an integral part of safety management systems. These results must be available to the authorities when they carry out inspections; - also new is the set of duties of the authorities to respond to safety reports within a specified time. For an existing installation the authorities would have 12 months in which to 'indicate satisfaction' with the report, or to request further information or to prohibit the continued use of the installation. For new installations reports would have to be submitted between 4-8 months of the start up date; - another new requirement concerns the updating of safety reports. under the present directive updating is only required 'periodically'. But under the new proposal review and, where necessary, updating would be required at least every 5 years, or at any other time at the request of the authorities or to take account of technical knowledge. Under the existing proposal both on-site and off-site emergency plans must be prepared. Several clauses are now expanded. Deadlines are laid down for the completion of energy plans. For new installations, on-site plans would have to be completed before start-up. They also must provide for the clean-up of the environment after a major accident. Other new provisions deal with the participation of the workforce and the public in the preparation of emergency plans. Also new is the provision that authorities would have to ensure that emergency plans were put into effect without delay in event of a major accident. One major innovation is the introduction of a system ofland use planning, designed to minimise the off-site consequences of major accidents and thereby limit the consequences of these accidents for humans and the environment. Member States have a general duty to make this an objective of their land-use policies and to achieve this by controlling the siting of installations, modifications and new developments around hazardous installations. Consultation with local authorities is the key of this system. Also important is that safety reports now should be made public. There should be public participation in decisions on major hazards. The rapporteurhopes that this will be further open up the debate on major accident hazard control policies, criteria for the siting and land use, which in the past have not been very transparent. Policing of major hazard sites varies across the EU. More consistent inspection arrangements will be introduced. Top-tier sites would have to be inspected at least every 12 months unless the authority has decided on a longer inspection frequency. Reports should be followed up with the site management within 3 months.