

Industrial major-accidents: hazard control, dangerous substances

2001/0257(COD) - 03/07/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Giorgio LISI (EPP-ED, Italy) on the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances. (Please refer to the summary dated 18/06/02.) Parliament expanded the list of areas that should, in the long term, be separated from dangerous establishments by buffer zones to include building, transport routes, industrial establishments and recreational areas. It also wanted the thresholds for ammonium nitrate lowered to 10 tonnes/50 tonnes, to include the category of this fertiliser which caused the accident at Toulouse. In addition, Parliament voted to include another fertiliser, potassium nitrate, whilst ensuring that farmers are not penalised for using it in the harmless form commonly used in agriculture. Parliament's amendments indicate that the scope of the directive should be broadened to include not only mining operations, but also mechanical operations, as well as chemical and thermal plants. Members went on to state that, in the light of the accident at Toulouse, it is vital to make the provisions applying to operators more stringent with regard to their general obligations, the relevance of safety reports, internal and external emergency plans and the information provided to the public. This is needed in order to reduce the risk of accidents at source and limit strategic errors in risk perception and trivialisation of risks. Member States must require the operator of a plant to draw up a document setting out his major-accident prevention policy evidencing his compliance with his obligations. The policy must be designed to guarantee a high level of protection for man and the environment by appropriate means, structures and management systems. Operators must also take the necessary measures to prevent domino effects occurring in the event of a major accident. The public will be informed of possible dangers and risks of domino effects through the local press, by post and on the official website of the regional authority concerned. There are certain minimum requirements for the contents of safety reports.