

MONSANTO REACHES A MILESTONE WITH FULL PLANT ISO REGISTRATION

Improved training, employee confidence are benefits

Monsanto's Anniston, AL Therminol functional fluids plant is the company's first entire plant site to receive ISO registration. Plant manager Bill DeFer says the path to certification began with a total quality steering committee with total plant involvement, followed by a gap analysis using quality program and ISO 9000 standards.

A key challenge was to set up a quality system framework without creating unnecessary paperwork burdens. "If you don't do it right, it can make your life miserable later on," DeFer says. Documentation and other efforts were focused on areas that give value directly to the customer or add to the smoother operation of the plant, he adds.

Next came documenting all procedures, such as loading trucks with finished product and measuring through self-auditing any differences between established procedure and actual prac-

tice. A pre-assessment visit by the outside auditors turned up gaps in instrument calibration—specifically, the need to periodically check that instruments measuring properties such as viscosity are properly calibrated against a reliable, objective measure.

"We had to make sure what we use to check it against is traceable back to something that's really right. The documentation and traceability was a change for us," DeFer says.

The need to document all training received by employees "sounds simple, but it's not," DeFer says. "We've got people who've been here 20 or 30 years," and determining the details of their training history is no easy task—many of them were simply "grandfathered in." The plant's previous train-



ing mix of classroom time and on-the-job learning has been replaced by "very rigorous training program requirements for each division in the plant," DeFer says. Looking at the newest batch of employees he sees "obvious differences. The professionalism of the training has increased," as has the confidence level of the newer employees, he says. "You can tell the difference."

Certification came at the end of September, along with a warning from the assessor. "If I come back on the next visit and find everything just the way it is, I'm not going to be able to continue the registration," the assessor said, underscoring the importance of con-

tinuous improvement—an aspect of quality management that should result from internal audits and corrective action elements of the ISO standard.

The Anniston plant is also a Star plant in the Occupational



DeFer: Traceability key.

Safety and Health Administration's voluntary worker protection program. Monsanto is committed to reaching that top level at all its plants by the end of 1997, says a spokesperson, who adds that two more plants expect ISO certification in the first quarter of next year.

NOTHING UNUSUAL In addition to the Anniston plant, this year has brought four other ISO 9002 registrations for Monsanto: the Pensacola Vydine nylon operations in February; the Indian Orchard (Springfield, MA) plant's Saflex interlayer for glass operation in September; the Newport, Wales Dequest water treatment operations in September; and the Chocolate Bayou (Alvin, TX) Therminol raw materials operations in October.

John Henshaw, director/quality and compliance assurance in Monsanto's corporate environmental safety and health group, says that as part of Monsanto's total quality program, "we're in the throes of examining how we're doing in managing environmental programs and how to measure them—whether we're meeting our goals and objectives." Nothing unusual has turned up, he says, just the need for fine tuning and "wider communication of the process, wider acceptance

and wider responsibility for managing environmental programs and for accomplishing our goals, from the plant line operator to senior management."

With an eye to the ISO environmental standards in the works, DeFer says that with all such quality management systems, whether they focus on safety or the environment, "the thrust is the same: document what you do. Push the ownership of the quality or safety system down to the lowest level of the organization. That's the key and the synergy for what you do with all these programs."

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