file - PCB

One basic problem yet to be solved, but which is of particular importance for chemicals, is the need for further definitional classification of chemical plants as producers. As Table 4 demonstrates, plants carrying the primary 4 digit SIC code, 2819-Inorganic Chemicals, can be as diverse as one making sulphuric acid (281911) or, as in the case of the Union Carbide plant at Oak Ridge, Tenn., one making plutonium (281974). Some of the 5- and 6-digit codes used in Table 4 are the responsibility of EIS and do not necessarily coincide with the Standard Industrial Classification System, which often is not an adequate indicator of the detail needed for chemicals. Thus, the Census SIC code 28182 represented, without any further detail, some $4 billion of output of all "miscellaneous acyclic chemicals and chemical products" in the 1967 Census.

In choosing fifth and sixth digits in Table 4, we tried to reflect the actual technology of chemical production in these industries, which in turn makes it easier to assign the additional codes to various chemical plants.

As an illustration, plants carrying the 4-digit code 2812, "Alkalies and Chlorine" tend to fall into the following three sub-classes:

(*a*) Those engaged in the electrolytic production of caustic soda and chlorine from brine, and those making caustic potash (KOH) from potassium chloride. These electrolytic products have the SIC codes 28121, 28123, and 28124, and all plants falling into this category will carry each of these three 5-digit codes.

(*b*) Plants making synthetic soda ash on the basis of the ammonia-soda or Solvay process, from salt, limestone, and coke will carry the 28122 code.

(*c*) Other plants may be recovering alkalies from mineral ores such as trona, sylvanite, potassium carbonate, and brines. These plants will carry the code 28125.

Our file contains a total of 4,300 plants, each with over 20 employees, that now carry a 4-digit chemical SIC code and account for 96% of the $50 billion total output of all chemical plants. We are now corresponding with executives in these plants in order to ascertain the feasibility of adding fifth and sixth digits (as indicated in Table 4) to identify a plant's secondary activities. Such further definitional detail would permit an extension of the usefulness of I/O applications of the kind discussed above. Its success requires a considerable cooperative effort on the part of chemical companies particularly. The additional marketing insights available from such a survey should be readily apparent, and should encourage chemical firms to share non-confidential information.

Editor's Note: Conversations with EIS indicate that they are anxious to cooperate with companies who would be willing to disclose only the names (codes) of those chemicals which they buy and sell. No charges will be made and it is *not* requested that any information other than product identity be disclosed. It seems that such disclosure can encourage more efficient competition and is therefore to be encouraged. Contact EIS for details.

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AN "ASSISTANT EDITORIAL"

Recently on network TV I heard a little-known astronaut make a statement to the effect—"Imagine being able to move the Empire State Building with one finger—yes, that folks, is the exhilaration we feel out in Space!"

I presume he was speaking about weightlessness—never mind inertia or something to lean against while "pushing!" The point is that characters like that are speaking for the scientific community in this country while the scientific community is talking to itself.

Last year I attended a meeting where several good, nonjargonish talks were given on the beneficial side of pesticides. Fine—everyone applauded and "Hear-heared!"—and then went home and allowed DDT and, soon, others to be taken off the market so that at least four people could die of poisoning by a much more toxic but environmentally safe insecticide! Does the public see accounts of the finding of PCB's and mercury in Egyptian mummy's and ancient preserved foods?

I contend that it is our duty to inform the public of these findings, about the simple facts about safe usage of most chemical products, and about the risks involved in sudden adoption of replacement substances not subjected to long-term testing programs.

"Ah-hah," you say: "you are talking to us and not the public." True, but I practice what I tirade. When giving tours of our Research Building I explain safety of long-proven chemicals and relate the difference between finding part-per-billion residues and actual damage to anything from such residues. Especially important is the fact that any chemical, even table salt, can kill if you get enough of it but the degree of danger lies in the normal expected intake plus a reasonable margin of safety.

S. Oestreicher, Asst. Editor,
"The Kansas City Chemist,"
writing in his May issue

MONS 069853