

The Environmental Impact of Industrial Accidents – COMAH Guidance

R&D Technical Summary P4-111/TS

COMAH requires operators to demonstrate that they have taken all necessary measures to prevent or mitigate the impact of major accidents to the environment (MATTE). Operators must provide environmental risk assessments as part of their COMAH safety reports. This is a new duty for operators as previous CIMAH reports only required health and safety risk assessments. The Agency is responsible for assessing these environmental risk assessments and this is a new duty for the Agency.

The objective of this work was to provide a discussion on aspects of COMAH environmental risk assessment to inform Agency officers who would be responsible for assessing safety reports.

The project contractor who has a wide experience of CIMAH safety reports was commissioned to propose whether similar approaches could be used for COMAH environmental risk assessment.

The output of the project considers the full process of environmental risk assessment from characterisation of receiving environment to the consideration of tolerability of risk with the exception of derivation of source terms from hazard studies etc.

The principle output of the project was to develop an approach to environmental impact assessment based upon categorisation of accident frequency and severity into 6 bands forming a risk matrix which allows tolerability of risks to be assessed for COMAH. This is a traditional approach to health and safety risk assessment. The novel aspect of this work is the interpretation of the DETR MATTE guidance to develop the 6 severity bands.

The project output represents the views of an experienced contractor who has worked on many CIMAH and COMAH safety reports. It is not necessarily the views of the Agency. The report should be of value to Agency staff involved in the assessment of COMAH safety reports as a discussion of the problems involved and some examples of possible solutions. The report covers a number of topic areas,

which are being developed and incorporated into formal Agency guidance. These are identified in the project managers' executive summary.

This R&D Technical Summary relates to information from R&D Project [P4-111](#) reported in detail in the following [outputs](#):-

R&D Technical Report [P4-111/TR](#)

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