
EDITORIAL



Dear reader

You hold a very special issue of CHIMIA in your hands. It is dedicated to a fringe area of industrial chemistry. The preparedness for hazardous-materials incidents is crucial for the acceptance of chemistry in the general public. Since laymen cannot fully understand chemical risks they act on instinct with aversion to chemistry. It is the task of the chemical industry to gain full public confidence in their activities in research, production, and transportation. In line with the Responsible Care Program, private fire brigades of Swiss-based chemical companies play therefore a key role in the HazMat incident management. The American phrase Hazardous-Materials Response Teams points out nicely that HazMat incident management is teamwork of different specialists.

The thread of this special issue has its origin in the organization and concept of intervention of Swiss Hazardous-Materials Response Teams. Four basic tasks of HazMat response teams are presented in the next articles. The reader can participate in the rich experience of the authors. With the recent sad accidents in road tunnels, worst case scenarios such as burning trucks with dangerous goods in a tunnel gained more attention. Some technical weak points were identified, especially in tunnels more than ten-years old. Another operational area is in the laboratory. Quantities of chemicals are small but the range of hazardous properties of the, in many cases, unknown substances is almost unlimited. Risk can be reduced by a state of the art safety concept. The ultimate decision on complete success or flop of a hazardous materials incident response is strictly linked with the decontamination procedures. Simple, timely performed measures are of outmost importance. The last two contributions close the circle. They highlight the role of chemical experts as advisors to the officer in charge and as trainers of firefighters. In incidents with hazardous materials chemical characteristics under atmospheric conditions are determinant. So application and demonstration of basic principles are more important than highly sophisticated treatises.

The chemical industry and the volunteers in the Hazardous-Materials Response Teams are well trained and ready for action. What ails you?

Dr. Walter Jucker
DSM Nutritional Products, Werk Sisseln
Head of vitamin production and logistics
Building 324/308
4334 Sisseln
E-Mail: walter.jucker@dsm.com

With great pleasure the Editorial Board of CHIMIA warmly thanks the coordinating guest editor Dr. Walter Jucker acknowledging his strong efforts in planning and efficient collation of the present most attractive variety of contributions to the topic 'Hazardous-Materials Response Teams in Switzerland'.