Responsible Care
Our commitment to sustainability
The safety, health and environmental initiative of the chemical industry
Our Mission

Responsible Care aims to bring about continuous improvement in the safety, health and environmental (SHE) standards and performance of companies operating in the chemical industry in South Africa – who voluntarily pledge as signatories to the Responsible Care initiative to implement guiding principles designed to protect both people and the environment.

Our Vision

Responsible Care envisages a profitable, sustainable chemical sector in South Africa that contributes to the quality of human life and the economy through innovation and production, without harm to people, property or the environment.

Responsible Care aims to ensure that South Africa’s chemical sector is recognised by all stakeholders as a responsible industry playing an important role in bringing a wide range of benefits to society, while remaining open, honest and credible in all its dealings.
What is Responsible Care?

Responsible Care is a global initiative by the chemical industry to raise safety, health and environmental (SHE) standards throughout the sector through a comprehensive, harmonised programme of risk assessment, risk management and risk minimisation. The initiative is based on a set of core ethical principles, however it is much more than just a set of declarations and good intentions.

Responsible Care focuses on:
- Disseminating good management practices;
- Promoting mutual support among companies and associations;
- Encouraging companies to keep their stakeholders informed about what they make and do, and about their performance (including annual reporting of performance data);
- Helping the industry to engage and work with stakeholders at local, national, and international levels and listening to and addressing stakeholders concerns.

These objectives are achieved by means of legislative and regulatory compliance as a minimum standard and by adopting cooperative and voluntary initiatives with government and stakeholders.

Background

Throughout the world, the chemical industry contributes to the quality of human life through a wide range of innovative products and processes that benefit every facet of human life and the economy, from healthcare and agriculture to energy, clothing, transport and infrastructure.

However, by its very nature the chemical sector is subject to a number of risks and hazards that are potentially harmful to people and the environment. A series of incidents in the early 1980s led to establishment in Canada of the Responsible Care initiative, to bind members of the industry worldwide to a set of principles that would ensure continuous improvement in the safety, health and environmental (SHE) performance of the chemical industry.

Responsible Care is now practised in 53 countries and was introduced to South Africa in 1994 with 15 signatories by the Chemical and Allied Industries’ Association (CAIA). As at the end of 2010 CAIA Responsible Care in South Africa had 144 signatories and 14 consultant members and continues to grow in both membership and influence.
Responsible Care is designed to have a measurable impact on safety, health and environmental performance, and the programme therefore binds members to implement a rigorous system that includes:

1. Signing a voluntary Responsible Care Public Commitment at the highest level of the company;
2. Implementing world-class management practice standards on an incremental basis;
3. Regular auditing of compliance with Responsible Care Management practice standards, allowing for continuous progress;
4. Third-party verification of systems to ensure transparency and accountability;
5. Measuring, monitoring and publicly reporting on performance indicators to benchmark the industry against global standards.

One of the key objectives of Responsible Care is to improve the public understanding of chemistry and public perception of the industry. The chemical industry is sometimes not well understood or well regarded due to its technical nature and associated hazards. For this reason, Responsible Care emphasises the importance of transparent and credible communication with the public and other stakeholders.

The Responsible Care global charter was launched in 2006 by the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), of which CAIA is a member. The charter has strengthened the initiative through a more harmonised approach to implementation of Responsible Care’s guiding principles and core principles. The Charter has been signed by a number of international chemical companies including those in South Africa and is also supported by CAIA through the Chair of the CAIA Board.

Companies must be members of CAIA in order to become Responsible Care signatories. The practical implementation of Responsible Care starts with a public signing ceremony where the chief executive officer of the company makes a commitment to the guiding principles of Responsible Care, set out in the certificate below.

Implementing Responsible Care

Caia

Responsible Care

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Practical implementation of Responsible Care at site level takes place with the guidance of Management Practice Standards (MPS) documents, which cover all the key operational areas, including:

- Preparedness for emergency response to incidents;
- Health and safety of the workforce and the community;
- The safety of chemical processes;
- Safe storage and transportation of chemicals;
- Communication and interaction with the community;
- The prevention of pollution, waste management and environmental protection;
- Product stewardship.

Assessment of compliance with Responsible Care procedures and progress in implementation is a thorough, ongoing process that takes place at several levels and includes:

- **Self-assessment questionnaires:** These are completed during the first two years of membership as a means of self evaluation;
- **Quantitative Indicators of Performance (QIPs):** These are a set of measurable indices to be completed and submitted to CAIA annually for inclusion in the Responsible Care Annual Performance Report;
- **Third-party verification:** Verification of compliance is conducted every three years by trained Responsible Care auditors using the Responsible Care Audit Guidance Documents. Transport operators as allied members undergo the South African Safety Quality Assessment System (SQAS) audits originally developed by the European chemical industry council, CEFIC.
- **Responsible Care Award:** An annual award recognises and rewards companies for exceptional performance and is based on year-on-year improvements in QIPs, with site visits to shortlisted entrants.
The target audiences are reached through various media and include:

- The management and employees of CAIA members and Responsible Care signatories, as well as other companies and allied organisations in the chemical sector;
- Members of the general public and affected communities;
- Schools and universities, including learners, students, lecturers and teachers;
- Government, business leaders and policymakers
- Relevant government departments, NGOs and trade unions

Sustainability is a top priority for Responsible Care and this core message is contained in the tagline “Our Commitment to Sustainability.” The corporate identity was updated to give the logo and look-and-feel more impact across all target audiences and to communicate the values Responsible Care stands for – sustainable, professional, innovative and responsible.

Open, transparent and credible communication with stakeholders is one of Responsible Care’s core values. Reporting to members include ChemNews, a monthly newsletter to Responsible Care signatories and stakeholders, as well as regular internal editorials, workshop and other notices and resources such as posters.

The annual Responsible Care Performance Report reports on industry-wide performance on Responsible Care criteria against local and international benchmarks. The report is launched at a function for members, union and government representatives, NGO’s and the public and released both internally and to the mainstream media.

Building the Responsible Care brand in South Africa is also a priority. The Responsible Care brand has made great strides in the past year, through a comprehensive marketing, PR and communications campaign to ensure that Responsible Care (a) fulfils its mandate to gain the trust and understanding of the public, and (b) is positioned as the industry leader in South Africa in terms of SHE performance within the chemical industry and business in general.
Responsible Care proactively supports and assists companies in improving their SHE performance by means of the following:

- **Website:** CAIA’s website is a source of many documents, articles and resources that can be easily downloaded.

- **Voluntary Advisory Forum (VAF):** The VAF provides Responsible Care signatories with essential stakeholder feedback by means of an advisory panel drawn from all walks of life, including academic and research institutions, environmental NGOs and organised labour.

- **Process Safety Forum:** Members meet regularly in Johannesburg and Durban to share knowledge and information on improving process safety. This is particularly beneficial to smaller companies who do not have large budgets for training and resources.

- **Chemical Handling and Environmental Forum (CHEF):** Meets quarterly to discuss the handling, storage, transport and distribution of hazardous chemicals.

- **Training and workshops:** Regular workshops are held to keep members up-to-date with developments in the sector that affect them, including legislation, regulations and new technologies. A Responsible Care training course has also been launched.

- **Community interaction:** Responsible Care has an ongoing outreach programme to schools, universities and affiliated organisations, and requires members to initiate and maintain communication with their local communities, workforce and stakeholders.
Companies that are signatories to the Responsible Care initiative enjoy a number of benefits and advantages that deliver a significant competitive edge, including the following:

1. **Membership of CAIA:** This carries a number of benefits and advantages in itself, through representing the industry at the policy and regulatory level;

2. **Access to resources:** Substantial resources are made available to signatories for training and capacity-building. This is especially beneficial to smaller organisations.

3. **Improved efficiency:** Signatories realise significant cost-savings through implementing efficient systems that, for example, save water and electricity.

4. **Keeping up with industry developments:** Responsible Care keeps members up-to-date with new legislation and regulations – helping companies to ensure compliance with the law as a minimum standard – as well as new technologies and processes that improve productivity.

5. **Complying with international standards:** In terms of international trade, Responsible Care is a strategy for growth and survival, making it possible for companies to attain world-class standards and comply with international requirements.

6. **Improved operations and cost savings:** Implementing Responsible Care practice standards yields significant cost-savings and other benefits by reducing down-time and damage to plant and equipment due to safety incidents, and absenteeism due to ill health.

7. **Networking and knowledge exchange:** Responsible Care provides for peer support, networking and the exchange of knowledge and information among companies through various workshops and forums, including at an international level.

8. **Industry development and brand-building:** Responsible Care receives significant publicity across the broadcast, electronic and print media, boosting public and stakeholder perception of the industry and its member companies.

9. **Risk minimisation and mitigation:** The Responsible Care system of management practice standards, third-party verification and audit guidance documents acts as an early warning system to help prevent and mitigate incidents.

10. **Peace of mind:** Responsible Care gives management peace of mind that they are doing everything possible to ensure that the chemicals they manufacture will be produced, stored, transported and used in a responsible and sustainable manner, to minimise the risk of adverse consequences.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

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The Global Product Strategy (GPS) addresses the product stewardship components of Responsible Care. Responsible Care and the GPS are dedicated to the responsible handling of chemicals throughout the value chain thereby contributing to achieving the goals of the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). SAICM is a policy framework to foster the sound management of chemicals so that by 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

Product stewardship is the chemical industry’s initiative to ensure the safe use of chemicals throughout the value chain, i.e. in their manufacturing, use, recycling and disposal. The GPS addresses product stewardship worldwide in all aspects of the value chain thereby promoting a new level of information sharing and transparency. Today, product stewardship and its implementation through GPS have become central pillars of the Responsible Care initiative.

Associations (including CAIA) and their members have made serious commitments regarding their health, environmental and safety performance and especially, product stewardship. Implementation of an appropriate GPS program is crucial in managing chemicals throughout the value chain.

CAIA developed a GPS Implementation Plan for South Africa to improve product stewardship with the country’s chemical industry and with customers through the chain of commerce.

The key components of the GPS strategy include:

- Guidelines for product stewardship, including ways to make relevant product stewardship information more transparent.
- A tiered process for completing risk characterisation and risk management actions for chemicals in commerce.
- Product stewardship performance with a special focus on working directly with downstream customers of the chemical industry.
Responsible Care Signatories