

Industrial Accidents



Industrial Accidents Convention now in its twentieth year

The seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) will be held from 14 to 16 November 2012 in Stockholm, marking the Convention's twentieth anniversary.

The seventh Conference of the Parties is expected to take a number of decisions, including on:

- The opening of the Convention to all United Nations Member States, following interest expressed by various non-UNECE member States in acceding to it.
- Aligning the Convention's list of hazardous substances with the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals — which is being rolled out in 67 countries — to be consistent with the latest revision of the European Union's Seveso Directive.

The Conference of the Parties meets every two years to review implementation of the Convention and its previous workplan before taking a number of decisions for the next biennium. At its seventh meeting, the Conference will review the work of the Bureau, activities carried out within the Convention's Assistance Programme and the operation of the Industrial Accident Notification System. In addition, the Conference will adopt the Convention workplan for 2013–2014 and discuss actions to support ratification of the Convention's Protocol on Civil Liability, which is not yet in force.

The Conference will also include a seminar, organized by the host country, on how national authorities can support local authorities in preparedness for and response to industrial accidents.

The Convention's achievements in improving the level of industrial safety in the UNECE region are summarized in an anniversary publication: [Twenty years of Prevention, Preparedness and Response](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31253), available online from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31253>. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/cop7.html> or contact Nicholas Bonvoisin at: nicholas.bonvoisin@unece.org.

Standards

Introducing standards-related issues in educational curricula

UNECE is organizing a Workshop on "Introducing standards-related issues in educational curricula" on 7 November. The Workshop will be part of the twenty-second session of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6).

On this occasion, UNECE Weekly spoke to Professor Galina Pankina, rector of the Academy for Standardization, Metrology and Certification. The Academy is the educational body of the Federal Agency for Technical Regulation (Rosstandart) of the Russian Federation.

Professor Pankina, in your opinion, why are product standards important?

To the average person, standards may seem an obscure and boring subject. However, our whole life revolves around standards, or standards revolve around our life! Just think of these examples. Why do you expect a light bulb to fit into a lamp? a sheet of paper to slide through a photocopying machine? or that you can pay for your meals with your credit card when you are on holiday abroad? All these things are possible because companies around the world adopt the same standards in their everyday operations.

Why are product standards important to you, as an educational specialist?

Standards are a fundamental building block of our lives. They are also very interesting from the point of view of learning how consensus can be built, especially when points of view around the table are diverging. This is a fascinating subject to be taught to young people. For example, at the UNECE Workshop on "Introducing standards-related issues in

educational curricula" we will play a game that was designed by a University of Japan, titled "If you were President", on environmental management system standards.

You head an institution that specializes in training professionals and executives. Do you think that people should learn about standards already at University? Is that not a subject for specialists?

In the Republic of Korea, children already learn about standards in kindergarten! In Russia and NIS, my Academy collaborates with many higher school establishments and conducts numerous workshops, awareness-raising and training events in the various regions explaining how standards work and what compliance means for our life.

I know that a number of courses on standardization are taught in Europe and that the University of Geneva, for example, is starting a master programme on this subject.

Why are you participating in this UNECE Workshop?

I'm fascinated by the subject and want to bring my own perspective to the debate. Many people in the room are specialists in product or process standards. But my role is to see how their ideas can be made to fit into the reality of educational curricula of technical and classical universities as well as specialized establishments like my Academy, and within the resources that we have at our disposal for education. □

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=30034>.

Sustainable Energy



Uranium and thorium experts agree on widespread need for UN Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources

The potential application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 (UNFC) to uranium and thorium resources worldwide was the key focus of the discussions at the workshop on "Recent developments in evaluation of uranium and thorium resources" held in Lisbon from 15 to 18 October.

The event was organized jointly by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Ibero-American Programme for Science, Technology and Development (CYTED) and the UNECE, in collaboration with the Directorate General for Energy and Geology of Portugal's Ministry of Economy and Employment, and Empresa de Desenvolvimento Mineiro (EDM) – the State enterprise responsible for the restoration of mining sites. This was the first time the IAEA had organized a technical cooperation workshop with other partners.

Coming from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, more than 60 Government representatives with expertise in uranium, thorium and other minerals took part in the workshop. They presented details of case studies being undertaken by various government entities around the world regarding the possible adoption of the UNFC for uranium and thorium.

There was a unanimous request for increased technical assistance to facilitate application of the UNFC nationally, regionally and globally. The IAEA representative described the work being done to align the "Red Book" uranium resource classification to the UNFC through a "bridging document".

The many benefits of the UNFC for nuclear fuel resources include: improved global communications; increased transparency; consistent reporting; maximized resource efficiency (including thorium resources for possible future utilization); minimized contamination; improved cooperation with other sectors and stakeholders; and improved social acceptance by local communities. Key concepts for the nuclear fuel sector are comprehensive mining (disturb the ground once only) and ensuring that it has a social licence for its activities. The UNFC will help deliver on both.

During a site visit to the Urgeiriça Uranium and Radium Mine in Central Portugal, EDM provided technical details on the remediation of the mine.

UNECE's work on the UNFC is carried out by the Expert Group on Resource Classification, whose key focus is the further development and global promotion and application of the UNFC. UNFC is the only classification system in the world to address the solid-minerals, petroleum and uranium sectors using a single set of definitions and terminology.

David MacDonald, Chair of the Expert Group and Vice President of Segment Reserves, BP Exploration, said he was very impressed by “the quality of the debate and the significant interest in the UNFC. IAEA has ambitious plans to apply the UNFC to nuclear fuel resources worldwide and the Expert Group looks forward to assisting the Agency in achieving its goals”. □

For more information, please visit: <http://unece.org/energy/se/reserves.html>
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Water Resources



Belarus, Lithuania and the Russian Federation discuss joint management of the Neman River Basin under climate change conditions

For the first time, official representatives of the three riparian countries — Belarus, Lithuania and the Russian Federation — jointly discussed the challenges to and future prospects for water resources in the Neman River Basin, as well as potential climate change impacts, in workshops and a field trip held along the Neman River Basin in Belarus and Lithuania from 15 to 19 October 2012.

The field trip from Hrodna, Belarus, to Kaunas, Lithuania, combined with workshops in Hrodna and Druskininkia, Lithuania, were organized within the project “River basin management and climate change adaptation in the Neman River Basin”, implemented by UNECE and UNDP Belarus in the framework of ENVSEC. They brought together some 40 representatives of the environment ministries and the water agencies of the three riparian countries, as well as representatives of the UNECE Water Convention, UNDP, ENVSEC, international experts, local authorities and other interested stakeholders. Participants visited meteorological and hydrological stations as well as the new hydropower plant near Hrodna, the Kruonis pumped storage powerplant in Lithuania, and the recreational water park in Druskininkai.

The events served as a platform for discussion of the project results so far, including future climate projections; water balance modelling; needs and proposals to optimize the meteorological, hydrological and water quality monitoring systems in the basin; forecasts of future climate change impacts on water quality; and the elaboration of a common information platform for exchange of data between countries located in the basin.

The project has led to a common understanding among riparians that in the future the basin will likely suffer from stronger droughts in summer (increased air temperature combined with reduced flow), as well as increased and earlier floods in the lower part of the basin. The expected climate change impacts will affect agriculture, industry, water quality and other sectors. Some regions within the basin are especially vulnerable, such as the delta region in Kaliningrad (Russian Federation), which is located partly below sea level. The expected impacts may require countries to revisit their flood protection measures and infrastructure.

The event clearly showed the need for a transboundary approach to river basin management and climate change adaptation, which is the main aim of the project. It was noted that a basin-coordinated approach to operating Lithuanian water reservoirs could support flood protection in the lower-lying Russian part of the basin. Lithuania also recognized the importance of incorporating information from the entire basin, including the upper Belorussian part, into its river basin management plans to be revised in 2013–2014, and the important and useful role which the group of experts and officials created through the project could play in that regard. The project and its outcomes are also expected to support and strengthen the negotiations of the Neman basin agreement between the three countries of the basin and the European Union.

UNECE project website:

<http://www1.unece.org/ehlm/platform/display/ClimateChange/Neman+project+field+trip+and+workshops+15-19+October+2012>. □

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