www.unece.org/index.php?id=2858

Industrial accidents can cause significant damage to communities and the environment, both locally and across borders. The first line of defence against industrial accidents is to prevent them from occurring at all. The Convention therefore requires Parties to place prevention at the heart of their efforts to minimize the effects of industrial accidents. Article 6 of the Convention obliges Parties to take preventive measures, further specified in Annex IV, including measures to be carried out by Parties, competent authorities, operators, or by joint efforts.

A key step in preventing an industrial accident is to identify all hazardous activities within the jurisdiction of a Party. The Convention's annex I (amended in 2006) provides criteria for the identification of hazardous activities. Once a hazardous activity has been identified, according to articles 4 and 9 of the Convention, information on hazardous activities should be made available to the public and other countries that could be affected, because their cooperation will be required to reduce the transboundary impact of an industrial accident should one occur.

As part of Parties' obligations with regard to prevention, article 6 also requires that the operators of any hazardous activity provide an analysis and evaluation of the activity. Matters which should be considered in the analysis and evaluation are detailed in annex V.

The analysis of hazardous activities is especially important when new developments are being planned. Before any new industrial facility is constructed, proper land use planning should be conducted to determine the most suitable site. The choice of location of the new facility should aim to reduce any risks associated with the hazardous activity and should also take into account the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention).

Prior to any industrial facility being built, meaningful and effective public participation should also take place. Annex VI of the Convention states that the results of public consultation and participation processes should be considered pursuant to Article 7, concerning decision-making on the location of hazardous activities. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice (Aarhus Convention) also offers guidance in this regard.

To assist Parties in meeting their obligations with regard to the prevention of industrial accidents, several guidelines have been produced under the auspices of the Convention. These include Guidelines for Location Criteria, Safety Guidelines for Tailing Management Facilities, Safety Guidelines for Pipelines, and a Checklist System for Safety Reports.

In addition, the Convention secretariat organizes regular trainings on the prevention of industrial accidents as part of its Assistance Programme. The Assistance Programme aims to utilize the expertise of other countries to ensure best practice in preventing, preparing for and responding to an industrial accident and to ensure that countries are able to fully implement the Convention.