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Revision of safety datasheets to comply with REACH

The EU REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Assessment of Chemicals) Regulation is expected to be adopted by the European Commission in Spring 2007. Although cement clinker is specifically exempted from this Regulation, a number of chemicals are used in the manufacture of cement, and consequently cement safety datasheets are being revised to ensure compliance with the Regulation as drafted. For purposes of consistency, CEMBUREAU, the European Cement Association, is preparing a harmonised cement safety datasheet that will be used by all its members across the European Union including the UK.

The harmonised cement safety datasheet will contain information on hazard identification, first aid measures, spillage procedures, handling and storage, exposure controls and personnel protection, toxicological, ecological and regulatory issues. The work on the harmonised cement safety datasheet should be completed by October 2006.

In the meantime, UK cement companies will continue to provide their own cement safety datasheets to accompany deliveries of cement. Cement safety datasheets can be provided by cement companies or downloaded from their websites. Downstream users such as concrete plants have a responsibility to pass on the appropriate environmental, health and safety information to their customers. The cement industry will be working with its customers to ensure that their procedures comply with the harmonised cement safety datasheet and that the correct information is forwarded to end users.

Mike Gilbert, Chief Executive of the British Cement Association (BCA), said: “We advise that people wear appropriate safety protection; such as waterproof protective clothing, boots, gloves and eye protection whenever they work with wet cement or concrete. Cement is safe to use if basic precautions are taken.”

For further information:

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Notes to editors:

1. Direct contact with wet cement, wet concrete or wet mortar may cause irritation, dermatitis or burns. Furthermore, there is a risk of serious damage to eyes and contact between cement powder and body fluids (e.g. sweat and eye fluid) may also cause skin and respiratory irritation, dermatitis or burns.
2. The British Cement Association (BCA) is the trade and research organisation that represents the interests of the United Kingdom's cement industry in its relations with Her Majesty's Government, the European Union and relevant organisations in the United Kingdom. The members of the BCA (Buxton Lime Industries, Castle Cement, Cemex Cement UK and Lafarge Cement UK) are the major domestic manufacturers of Portland cement producing over 90% of the cement sold in the UK.

The cement industry has an annual turnover of £775 million and is a major supplier to the construction industry. It employs around 3,400 people directly with a further 15,000 jobs depending upon its operations. Website: www.cementindustry.co.uk