

## **Panel: Chemical Industry Needs Risk Guidance**

The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — The chemical industry needs guidance in choosing alternative processing methods to reduce or eliminate hazards, a national panel said in a report released Friday.

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations require chemical companies to follow certain procedures to ensure manufacturing processes are safe. But the report by the National Research Council said the industry lacks common practice protocols and understanding to identify safer processes.

It recommends that the U.S. Chemical Safety Board or other entity develop a plan to help chemical plant managers choose alternative processes to reduce or eliminate hazards.

One method, known as an "inherently safer process" assessment, aims to minimize or eliminate a hazard. But the assessment does not always provide clear guidance. The report said switching to a non-flammable solvent in a process would remove a fire hazard. But if the solvent is toxic, a new hazard is created.

Use of inherently safer process strategies would reduce the number of vulnerable areas around a company's facilities, which would decrease the scope of emergency preparedness programs. But it potentially could narrow the focus too much and overlook certain outcomes, the report said.

Congress ordered the study following a 2008 explosion at BayerCropscience's plant in Institute that killed two workers. The explosion occurred near a storage tank containing methyl isocyanate, a highly toxic chemical also known as MIC. The tank was not damaged and the chemical wasn't released.

Bayer took measures to reduce risks associated with MIC manufacturing and storage at the Institute plant. But the company did not incorporate all possible methods to control hazards, the report said.

**Source URL (retrieved on 08/30/2014 - 1:24am):**

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/05/panel-chemical-industry-needs-risk-guidance>