

Editorial

Chemical accidents with serious consequences are still happening in OECD countries and worldwide. Over the past decades, successive major accidents have caused deaths, injuries, significant environmental pollution and massive economic losses – from the hydrogen fluoride leak in Gumi, Korea, in 2012, to the ammonium nitrate explosion in West, Texas, in the United States in 2013, the Bento Rodrigues tailings dam disaster in Brazil in 2015 or, more recently, the explosion of a chemical facility in Tarragona, Spain, and the explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2020.

While high-profile accidents raise concerns in the public, stakeholder and regulator interest, there are an even greater number of accidents occurring each year that do not make international headlines. The hundreds of chemical accidents that go unnoticed every year still cause severe harm to workers, communities, municipalities, businesses and the environment, leading to an overall deterioration in quality of life. Recovering from industrial accidents sets back development gains, takes time and is expensive.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) *Global Chemicals Outlook II*, the market size of the global chemical industry exceeded USD 5 trillion in 2017 and is expected to double by 2030. The dependence on chemicals for technological progress, including for new energy sources, is increasing and many substances that are needed to implement new technologies are hazardous. Safety and accident prevention should be an integral part of discussions on the green transition and growing environmental issues. Sustainable development requires proper management of the risk of chemical accidents.

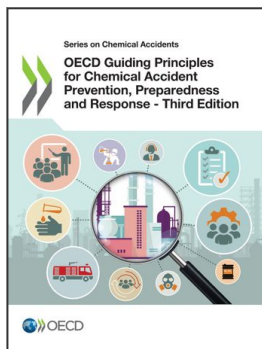
Many of the chemical accidents that continue to take place have similar causes and could have been prevented if lessons learnt from past accidents had been implemented and the basics of process safety management were correctly implemented. This Third Edition of the *Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response* aims to provide guidance, applicable worldwide, to support stakeholders in taking appropriate actions to prevent, prepare and respond to chemical accidents. It reflects on lessons learnt from major accidents throughout the world since the second edition was published in 2003 and on progress made in process safety management.

These Guiding Principles are the technical guidance underlying the application of the OECD Decision-Recommendation of the Council concerning Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response updated and consolidated in 2023.

The OECD Programme on Chemical Accidents, through its Working Party on Chemical Accidents, will continue to serve as an international forum to share experiences and challenges across countries and identify good practices to improve the prevention, preparedness and response to chemical accidents.

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