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WATCH COMMITTEE

REACH Competent Authority

The DEFRA minister Lord (Jeff) Rooker made the attached written statement on Tuesday 10 October, confirming that HSE will house the UK Competent Authority (CA) for the forthcoming EU REACH chemicals legislation. A project is now underway to bring into being appropriate arrangements for the delivery of this CA function. Confirmation of HSE's role in REACH has implications for a number of items on this WATCH agenda; these implications will be worked through during the November WATCH meeting.

The Minister's Statement :

"I am pleased to announce that together with my counterparts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, I have asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to take on the responsibilities of UK Competent Authority for the proposed new EU chemicals legislation REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of CHemicals) and that they will today be launching a helpdesk for UK business."

"The Competent Authority will provide advice and support to UK business for dealing with the requirements of REACH, liaise with the new European Chemicals Agency in Helsinki and coordinate enforcement of the regulations in the UK."

Background

The announcement was also made at the UK Chemicals Stakeholder Forum meeting on 10 October in Belfast. HSE attended to discuss its plans for the Competent Authority with members of the Forum, which includes representatives from the UK chemicals supply chain, non-governmental organisations, trades unions, environmentalists, and bodies representing consumer and animal welfare interests, and the scientific community.

The Health and Safety Executive will be responsible for delivering the functions of the competent authority working with the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland and in close partnership with the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Northern Ireland Environment and Heritage Service who will together help ensure delivery of the environmental benefits of REACH. The full Competent Authority will be operational when REACH enters into force.