

6.2 Guidance

Organising supply chain communication in the company

This document is part of the *International Chemicals Management Toolkit for the Toy Supply Chain* developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with the Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) within the framework of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project ID: 9771 on Global Best Practices on Emerging Chemical Policy Issues of Concern under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

It is important to organise and manage the [communication with suppliers](#) and with customers to ensure it is efficient, correct and reliable. Customers judge their suppliers' relationships not only based on the product, but also with a view to the ease and quality of communication. Communication with customers is important to enable them to implement a thorough chemicals management system [#Section 1 11 chemicals](#).

- Supply-chain communication should be a well-defined process with clear responsibilities within the company, e.g. allocated to the 'customer support' team
- Internal routines, guidelines and tools may facilitate the work of those who are responsible for communication with customers both in written and in direct communication.
- It is best if one person engages with a single client to avoid confusion and miscommunication.

Customers may request standard information, such as an up-to-date technical documentation of the product, or specific information, for example the content of a specific substance in a raw material. To answer requests about the material composition and its chemical constituents, or about compliance in general, the documentation of their own products should be readily available. This can be ensured by maintaining an up to date [chemicals inventory](#).

Some customer inquiries may need more research on the side of the supplier, e.g. if proof of compliance with specific laws or regulations is requested that the company is not aware of. Here, it should be ensured that the request is documented and processed in due time and the customer is provided with a clear answer to the question.

The efficiency of communication can be improved through the use of standardised templates or documents that are of good quality and that can be transposed and aligned to the global context as much as possible (e.g. safety data sheets that are consistent with GHS (for SDS guidance see annex 4 of the [GHS guidance document](#))). Companies with numerous products could significantly benefit from having SDSs, technical and other product documents in an online database or even on their public website. In fact, all companies can improve efficiency by making product-related documents publicly available.

To further optimise communication processes, automated IT-solutions can be adapted. For example, client contact forms on a company website could integrate a categorization option to automatically distribute the inquiries to the member of staff responsible for each category. This saves resources and reduces the need for internal coordination of staff.

References:

United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe (2019). *Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), eighth revised edition* . <https://unece.org/ghs-rev8-2019>.