

Cal Dooley reports exciting times for US PU and chemical industries

Robust growth in raw material demand has been experienced this year and should be sustainable into 2013 and beyond according to delegates attending this year's Center for the Polyurethanes Industry (CPI) Polyurethanes Technical Conference.

"This year's technical conference will help expand the PU market by pushing the envelope on performance," announced the **CPI** Steering Committee Chair **Steven Snead Smith**. This year's event was busier than ever, with a five year record high number of delegates, 895 in total, 147 attendees for the PDP courses, 63 technical papers, 26 posters and 36 exhibitors.[image_0]

Cal Dooley, President and CEO of the **American Chemistry Council (ACC)** gave an informed speech about the state of the US chemical industry and the impact of the current administration upon the sector. He talked about the advances in PU technology and products over the last 75 years and the role of the material in this year's London Olympics, the role of chemistry in the automotive industry and the use of PU materials in strengthening the new World Trade Centre, currently under construction in New York. He explained the contribution of the chemical industry to the US economy and expressed concern that the majority of politicians were lawyers and very few were scientists. The US chemical industry employs 800,000 Americans and for every job in the chemical industry, 7.6 jobs are created, making the industry responsible for some 6 million jobs. To endorse the importance of the chemical industry to the US economy, the ACC works hard to demonstrate how chemistry creates jobs and provides solutions to many of the country's challenges.

The ACC has to help the chemical industry to grapple with the reality of challenges related to bureaucracy, new regulations and environmental laws that come with TCSA, the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act all of which have fundamentally shaped the industry over the years. As far as new legislation is concerned, the ACC works hard to craft sensible regulations that allow the industry to develop solutions in response to some of the major challenges that face the economy. One of the major challenges is to help the chemical industry and the administration to understand risk hazards and exposure. Dooley listed the main challenges facing the chemical industry as Federal regulation, State regulation, local bans, market place de-selection and consumer activism.

Benefits vs. hazard avoidance is a current focus of advocacy when developing legislation. Hazard avoidance is a key feature of legislation. Since 2011 450 bills have been presented at state level to introduce hazard based regulations. "Hazard based legislation does not allow consumers to have a choice," Dooley explained. To help this situation, the ACC Responsible Care programme continues to improve product safety communication to retailers and consumers through the use of science.

Exciting times

Dooley suggested that the role of polyurethanes in energy efficiency and the cost benefits of low cost shale gas meant that the chemical industry was an exciting place to be currently. "This is the most exciting time in a generation to be involved in the US chemicals industry," he explained. "The US is now one of the most cost competitive places to manufacture chemicals and leverage our technological advances." As a result, chemical exports have continued to grow by double digits in the last two years "and there is a trend towards on-shoring, as a result," he continued.

"Going forward, the polyurethane markets in North America remain positive in terms of growth, the US polyurethane market will likely grow by 2.0 – 2.5 % in 2013, while Europe will continue to offer a number of propositions and challenges over the next few years," suggested **Dr. Mark Bassett**, Global Vice President, Polyurethanes, **Dow Chemical Co.**

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