

For the 2004 Solvents Stewardship Awards, the European Solvents Industry Group developed a new category: **Best submission from an applicant based in a new EU Member State**. Due to the high quality of applications in this new category, the jury decided to nominate two companies as joint winners; this case study looks at the application of **Balakom Corporation**.

ABOUT THE COMPANY



Balakom is a small and innovative Czech company that has been producing paints and varnishes since 1907. It is one of the oldest producers of paints in

central Europe. The Balakom product range is broad and includes synthetic paints for indoor and outdoor applications. It also includes oil-based paints, silicon paints, cements and plastic concentrates.

Remarkably, this is the second time Balakom has received an ESIG award. They were elected winner in the SME category in 2002 following their voluntary initiative to substitute aromatic-containing hydrocarbon solvents with dearomatised solvents in solvent-based decorative paints. This involved the replacement of low purity heavy naphtha, containing 17% aromatics, by solvents with less than 0.1% aromatics, which have far higher occupational exposure limits, are not classified as irritant, are not harmful to aquatic organisms and do not have any long-term adverse effects.

Balakom maintained the high performance quality of its products and communicated to its customers and workforce the advantages of reduced environmental and health impact of the new range. These changes were made ahead of legislation and at the forefront of the market, which is exceptional for an SME.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The ESIG award that Balakom received in 2004 recognises the company's achievements in developing and implementing technological solutions to reduce emissions in the workplace.

From 1996 onwards, Balakom started implementing a step by step programme to replace open pearl mills for the production of paints with closed mills (see fig. 1). The results were remarkable: tests

showed that emissions of solvent vapours fell from about 300-600 mgC/m³ to 100 mgC/m³.

The initial investment required was high for the size of the company but brought with it numerous health and environmental advantages such as improved working conditions for employees, lower noise levels, reduced VOC emissions and a decrease in the need for compulsory ventilation.



Fig. 1

OPINION OF THE JURY

The jury was particularly sensitive to the Health, Safety and Environmental awareness of the company, as demonstrated by two successful nominations in two years.

It was also recognised that these two projects were not driven by direct legislative constraints but were initiated on a voluntary basis.

Such companies are pace setters in these new regions and clearly lead the market towards improved products and production facilities.

SOLVENTS STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

The Solvent Stewardship Awards promote and encourage best practice and continuous improvements in the use of solvents. Awards are presented to companies that best demonstrate improvements in health, safety and environmental aspects in their use of solvents. The jury of the 2004 awards was composed of representatives of the following organisations: European Chemical News, European Commission - DG Enterprise, European Aerosol Federation, European Association of Craft Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and the European Chemical Industry Council.

MORE INFORMATION

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