

Atofina, the chemical branch of Elf Aquitaine is the 13th largest chemical company in the world, employing 33,000 employees and achieving a turnover of 58 billion French Francs in 1997. There are 7 sites in the UK, including the Chlorotoluene Derivative Division in Widnes which manufactures intermediate chemicals, some being used in the manufacture of perfumes, but most of which are supplied to other Atofina manufacturing sites in France.

The chemical industry is of course subject to a high degree of regulation, which sets out to ensure safe working practises are adhered to and the environment is protected. The storage of chlorine at Widnes, a



potentially lethal chemical for which there are separate regulations, adds further to the already onerous task of managing an ISO9000 quality system, health and safety and environmental systems.

Atofina recognised at an early stage that the management of regulatory inspections and maintenance of the appropriate plant histories would require a computerised system. Home-grown databases were therefore developed by Atofina to administer these records. The processes at Widnes are however, forever being developed and changed as new demands for product are placed upon them. "Our home-grown solutions simply could not cope with the amount of change," says Steve Warnock, project manager at Atofina, "we also needed to streamline the management of the engineering stores, as everything was controlled using manual stock cards and ledgers. With the old system it could take up to 24 days to process a purchase order, now we can issue purchase orders immediately and know that they are accurate."

Atofina reviewed all of the leading CMMS systems available on the market at the time, some of which they found to be many times the price of IMPACT. At the end of the day however, it was not just highly competitive pricing that persuaded Atofina to use IMPACT, "it was the only system that could cope with the requirement to track rotatable equipment effectively. Our key

requirement was to track plant changes" Steve explains, "IMPACTxp has allowed us to identify the most expensive areas of the plant. In one part of the process we were able to identify that two pumps were failing

approximately every month. This was due to their position in the process and the chemicals that were being passed through them, nothing at all to do with the reliability of the pump itself. We have since changed the type of equipment which has saved us between £20,000 to £30,000 each year"

The team at Atofina have used the highly configurable asset structure in IMPACTxp very effectively. In a complex chemical plant it would be unfeasible to enter every valve, instrument and piece of pipework into the asset register. "The plant engineers would have re-designed the site and moved everything several times before we could hope to enter all of the data into IMPACTxp." Instead focus has been placed on the high value assets such as tanks, heat exchanges, pumps and motors. IMPACTxp maintains a full history for each item of these items, as well as a history for each location they have been used in. The valves and instruments are set up as "services" within the asset structure and work orders and costs are accounted for at this level, more than sufficient for the company's needs.

The majority of the work at Widnes is reactive, breakdown maintenance, because of the nature of the production process and the high degree of change. "Pumps simply get wiped out by the mix of chemicals that pass through them and we have to react to the needs of production." Statutory inspections are of course scheduled using the

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comprehensive preventive maintenance routines provided by IMPACTxp and the three teams of maintenance engineers rotate between planned and reactive maintenance shifts.

Health and safety is of course, of paramount importance in a chemical plant and procedures must be strictly adhered to when working on certain parts of the plant. IMPACTxp has therefore been set up with links to the appropriate word-processed procedures, so that they are always printed whenever work orders are produced. The link to image and CAD files has also been of benefit to Steve and his team. "By having a drawing of a manifold available, we can quickly and reliably manufacture a replacement when needed, rather than spending time measuring up the failed item."

Each of the team at Widnes are responsible for using IMPACTxp for reporting details of the actual work carried out and the hours they have spent on each job. The system has proved to be very easy to use and has been received well by the engineers. Time spent on jobs is entered quickly and easily using a time sheet interface, whilst comments for plant history are captured without the need to type. "We have set up standard descriptions and

completion comments for the bulk of the work" explains Steve, "the text is simply picked from a list and any extra comments can then be added." The discipline of using a computerised system has also improved communication between Steve and his team. The fact that each item of plant has a unique code, means that everyone knows exactly which part of the plant they are referring to, avoiding the past confusions caused by different names being used by production and maintenance.

Atofina's commitment to IMPACTxp continues and the company is currently planning to involve production themselves in the use of IMPACTxp, by introducing the Help Desk module. The PC network now reaches most area of the plant, which will allow production staff to enter requests for work directly into the system. Steve will then assess each request and plan work as appropriate. The new system will save production staff the time they currently spend walking across site to deliver each request to the maintenance team and will give them immediate feedback on the progress of each job. The alarms and mail facilities provided by IMPACTxp will also mean that maintenance staff will be automatically informed of new requests, hence improving continuity between shifts.