

What Is The Dow Chemical Company?

The Dow Chemical Company is headquartered in Midland, USA, and was formed in 1897. The Dow Chemical Company is a diversified, worldwide manufacturer of more than 3,500 basic and performance chemicals and plastics, and agricultural products that are primarily used by customers as raw materials to manufacture a diverse range of products that serve various consumer markets.

The Company serves the following industries: appliance; automotive; agricultural; building and construction; chemical processing; electronics; furniture; housewares; oil and gas; packaging; paints, coatings and adhesives; personal care; pharmaceutical; processed foods; pulp and paper; textile and carpet; utilities, and water treatment.

Dow conducts its worldwide operations through global businesses that are organized in six operating segments: Performance Plastics, Performance Chemicals, Agricultural Sciences, Plastics, Chemicals, and Hydrocarbons and Energy.

The Dow Chemical Company is the world's largest manufacturer of chemicals, with annual sales exceeding USD30 billion. As the world's largest producer of chlorine, an essential component of the potential cancer-causing chemical, dioxin, Dow is undoubtedly the largest root source of dioxin on the planet.

In addition, through its subsidiary Dow AgroSciences, Dow is one of the largest producers of insecticides (Dursban), herbicides (Clincher) and fungicides, and has produced some of the most dangerous pesticides known to man, including DDT, Dursban, and 2,4,5-T, the active ingredient of Agent Orange. Dow is now increasing its investment in genetically modified crops that can withstand high doses of its pesticides.

About Dow South Africa

Dow's headquarters in Africa are located in Bryanston (Johannesburg), South Africa. Dow's primary manufacturing location in South Africa is the Dow Plastics operation in Sasolburg. This plant was previously a joint venture between Sentrachem and Hoechst. When Dow acquired Sentrachem, Hoechst's 50% holding was purchased by Dow making it wholly owned by Dow. The main products manufactured in Sasolburg are polypropylene and high-density polyethylene. These products are sold within Africa and globally. Propylene oxide is a potential occupational carcinogen and is on the EPA (USA) list of hazardous air pollutants.

All DOW activities in South Africa:

<http://www.bhopal.net/oldsite/dow-watch/dowcarbideworldwide.html>

1. Bryanston, Bryanston houses the Customer Services centre and corporate office, the main centre of Dow's business in Southern Africa.
2. Old Mill Site, Canelands, Durban - Head office for Dow Agrochemicals in South Africa. It has been reported that the chemical methylisocyanate is used at this plant, the same chemical that leaked from the Union carbide plant in Bhopal, India. (See below for more details on Bhopal disaster)
3. Sentrachem, Kempton Park, A wholly owned subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company. Branches of Sentrachem also found in Sasolburg, Germiston, Isipingo, Umgeni
4. Union Carbide South Africa (Proprietary) Limited, is a Subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company,

South Africa

5. Sasolburg is Dow's primary manufacturing location in South Africa.

6. Pretoria, Silverton is the administrative head office of the Southern Africa LBU and all commercial activities (Crop SA and Africa, Speciality and Efekto is conducted from this site. Research and Development (R&D), marketing, customer service and administrative functions are also based on this site

Corporate Accountability

The chemical industry in South Africa has been allowed to get away with murder. A global move towards greater corporate accountability has shown that these companies can no longer hide, shareholder activism is increasing and will lead to the downfall of these companies, and most importantly civil society will no longer remain silent. A sterling example of this is the two activists from Bhopal who against all odds have campaigned against Dow chemicals. In recognition of their work, Rashida Bee, who has lost six family members to cancer since the leak, and her colleague, Champa Devi Shukla, received the coveted Goldman Environmental Prize in San Francisco last month and are currently touring the United States. They plan to attend the Dow shareholder meeting on 13 May 2004 to make their voices heard. It is time that Dow accepts its moral and legal responsibility for the world's worst industrial disaster.

Dow Chemicals Environmental Justice Legacy

www.bhopal.net/oldsite/dow-watch/index.html

Chemicals conspiracies, 1954 to date

Dow and Union Carbide knew in 1954 that vinyl chloride caused cancer, but they and other companies hid the facts from their own workers, from the public and from the government for years. See www.pbs.org/tradesecrets/program/vinyl.html for the documents.

Napalm, 1968

Dow Chemical was the key manufacturer of chemical warfare agents Napalm and Agent Orange for the US government during the Vietnam War. The US government dropped more than 19 million gallons of herbicidal agents on the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

2,4,5-T Poisons Globe, Arizona, 1970

In 1970, miscarriages and illnesses, linked to the spraying of 2,4,5-T (half of Agent Orange) by the Forest Service in Globe, Arizona, resulted in a court case between Dow and the local community. Although Dow knew about the deleterious effects of the herbicide, it refused to accept liability and finally settled in 1981. The same situation arose in the Alsea Valley in Oregon, prompting the EPA to prohibit 2,4,5-T.

DBCP Sterilizes Thousands of Central American Workers, 1970s

Dibromochloropropane (DBCP), a pesticide, was banned in the U.S. in 1978 after its use was linked to both sterilization and cancer. However Dow and other chemical manufacturers continued to produce DBCP for export to newly industrializing countries. Twenty-five thousand farm workers in

Costa Rica and other countries brought suit against Dow for sterility from DBCP's use in banana crops. Dow initially tried to block the suit from being brought, but ultimately was forced to settle for \$41.7 million along with Shell and Occidental Petroleum in 1997.

See http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1991/07/mm0791_10.html

Union Carbide gas leak in Bhopal, India, 1984

Twenty years ago a deadly gas leaked from the Union Carbide's pesticide factory in Bhopal, India killing more than 8,000 people within three days and over 20,000 people have died to date as a result of their exposure. An estimated 150,000 people continue to suffer from long lasting effects of gas exposure, which include diminished vision, cancer, and respiratory, neurological and gynecological disorders. The chemical that was released, methyl isocyanate (MIC), is an ester of isocyanic acid (HNCO). It is highly volatile and inflammable and is easily produced and stored at room temperature.

Despite acquiring Union Carbide, Dow Chemical has refused to address Carbide's pending liabilities in Bhopal that include medical and economic rehabilitation of victims, clean-up of toxic wastes and contaminated groundwater, and provision of safe drinking water.

Exporting Unregistered Pesticides to Africa, Latin America, 1990

Dow's joint venture with Eli Lilly, DowElanco, exports two pesticides from the United States which are not registered with the EPA. The EPA has refused DowElanco's registration application for haloxyfop, an herbicide marketed under the names "Gallant" and "Verdict," and has classified it as a "probable human carcinogen." According to a July 1990 Greenpeace report, "Never-Registered Pesticides," haloxyfop is used in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. The EPA has refused to set a permissible amount of residue (known as food residue tolerances) for both haloxyfop and nuarimol, a DowElanco product sold under the trade names "Gauntlet" and "Tridal." The EPA refused to permit any nuarimol residues on food because it creates cancer and birth defects in laboratory animals. Nevertheless, Greenpeace reports that nuarimol is used in Africa, Colombia and Honduras and Europe. Though the EPA technically bans haloxyfop or nuarimol residues on food sold in the United States, they are likely to appear anyway, since "food is rarely tested for residues at the border," according to the Greenpeace report.

See http://multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1991/07/mm0791_10.html

"Dead Peasant" Life Insurance, 2002

At one time, only a handful of people had ever heard of "dead peasant" life insurance. But the word has got out that Dow and a few other companies have been sued for taking out secret life insurance policies on their employees and keeping the proceeds when the workers die. As the widows and widowers file lawsuits to recover the insurance money, which some judges have ruled rightly belong to the family members, one well-known Houston law firm is trying to position itself as the expert for companies to call when family members of deceased employees start asking questions.

Agent Orange Poisons One Million Vietnamese, 2003

Birth defects resulting from contamination with the chemical herbicide persist in today's third generation of grandchildren of the war and its victims - with no end in sight. An estimated 650,000

victims suffer from chronic illnesses in Vietnam alone, and another 500,000 have already died, researchers say.

See Asia Times: www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EG11Ak03.html

Agent Orange Found in Vietnamese Food Supply, 2003

Decades after the wartime defoliant Agent Orange was sprayed over Vietnam, toxic chemicals continue to contaminate Vietnamese people and the food they eat, according to a new study released Monday. The finding, published in the August issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, found that six out of 16 food samples taken last year from around the southern city of Bien Hoa, a former U.S. air base, had levels of dioxin approaching those found during the Vietnam War. "Dioxin was found in ducks, chickens, a bottom-dwelling fish and a toad. Samples of pork and beef showed negligible levels."