



SAMTEC

SAMTEC's Innovative Best Practices in Product Stewardship and Compliance Provide Competitive Advantage

From high speed interconnects to flex circuitry to RF components and cables – SAMTEC Inc. manufactures a variety of highly specialized electronic components for sale around the world. After over 30 years of business, this privately-held firm with headquarters in southern Indiana has grown to achieve sales approaching \$500 million annually and more than 2,000 employees in the United States, China, Costa Rica, Malaysia and Panama.

SAMTEC actively supports industry standards for best practices in environmental management such as ISO 14000, yet its electronics manufacturing processes require the use of certain chemicals that are closely watched by not only the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) but also the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS provides companies with a list of thresholds for quantities of selected chemicals that they are permitted to have on site at their facilities at any one time. If the aggregated amount of a restricted chemical reaches thresholds specified on the “Chemicals of Interest” list – part of the Chemical Facility Antiterrorism Standards – then the company must report the variance to DHS. EPA’s Tier II inventory reporting for EPCRA is another threshold-based regulation that provides a limit (in pounds) of specified chemicals that may be managed over a reporting year. If a business operation exceeds that threshold, then the company must provide an annual report to EPA.

SAMTEC was committed to ensuring compliance with these and other regulations by constantly monitoring and managing all of its chemical materials but the job was getting more difficult.

“As our company grew and we got into other product lines, we quickly found there was a need for a system to monitor and manage environmental and safety issues throughout the organization,” said Nick Knable, Environmental Manager at SAMTEC. “Automating scheduled threshold reporting and inventory integration became a critical business management need.”

Since Material Safety Datasheets (SDSs) are essential to best practices in environmental and safety – providing pivotal baseline information and guidance regarding the proper handling of hazardous materials – the team at SAMTEC looked for a comprehensive SDS management system and services provider to meet their specialized needs. They chose ComplyPlus® software from Sphera

CHALLENGE

- Ensure accurate compliance with threshold-based DHS Chemical of Interest List
- Automate EPCRA Tier II reporting for EPA
- Quickly and easily identify security or threshold breaches
- Eliminate manual paper-based SDS system and spreadsheet reporting

SOLUTION

Product Stewardship

- SDS Management System
- SDS Content Services
- Chemical Management & Reporting

RESULTS

- By incorporating SDS web base solution, eliminated the need for over a dozen binders with 1800+ hard copies of SDS's.
- Prevented reporting delays of days or weeks by producing reports in minutes
- 1,500 users at 10 facilities worldwide use system to boost productivity and help company achieve competitive advantage
- Real-time snapshot of hazmat inventory levels provides early warning if there facility is approaching threshold limits
- Provided baseline information needed to manage potential issues proactively
- Flexible and scalable solution supports global adoption and continued growth – e.g. translation into Chinese and Spanish

SAMTEC: Best Practices in Product Stewardship, Compliance

“Now it would be virtually impossible to do our job without using this system,” Knable said. “To be honest with you, it's a tool that we use every day.” SAMTEC currently tracks 1886 unique products and thousands of separate inventory items in its centralized Comply Plus database. Each unique product is represented by its own SDS. The company also monitors extremely hazardous substances such as cadmium, mercury, arsenic as well as ozone depleting substances. Because there so many substances to track, manual data mining via thousands of pieces of paper, manuals and spreadsheets would cause major reporting delays of days or weeks in SAMTEC's environmental management division.

“Now I can get any report I need in just a minute or two. For me to try to do a manual hand search of all our SDSs would waste too much time. Increasing productivity is an important competitive advantage for SAMTEC,” Knable explained.

The time savings and increased productivity that this approach has achieved are not limited to SAMTEC's facilities on the continental U.S. As many as 1,500 people at 10 different facilities in the U.S., Costa Rica, China and Malaysia utilize Sphera's Comply Plus software as a key component of their environmental reporting process.

“We use the Sphera system extensively and it's something that can grow with us. The system is very customizable. We integrated the Sphera solution with our own hazardous material inventory. That's what we were looking for - a tool that was very flexible for our needs.”

As a result, SAMTEC is now utilizing a unique enterprise-level system that not only houses the company's SDSs but also allows users to inventory, track and report materials. It provides a direct link between production materials and products, giving the environmental management team the in-depth analysis capabilities that they need to fulfill their reporting obligations across a variety of national, state and local jurisdictions. Selected parts of the system have been translated into Spanish and Chinese.

“It gives us a live snapshot in real time of our inventory levels and whether or not we are reaching any threshold,” Knable says. “We generate a hazardous material inventory report that integrates with the SDSs then marry these two reports. I get an email showing me any of the security or threshold breaches.”

Comply Plus enables users to manage and report ongoing compliance status of suppliers, products, chemicals, parts and materials, as well as the associated risk profiles of the supply chain during proposal, introduction, transition, and amendment of complex regulations.

“We have become more proactive than reactive in addressing issues before they become problems,” Knable says. “Our company has recently experienced rapid growth and changes in our management systems and processes proved necessary to track government regulations. Creating and adopting change while trying to maintain operations during a major growth period of the company was a challenge we successfully met thanks to information technology.”

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Nick Knable,
Environmental Manager
Samtec

For Nick and the rest of the team at SAMTEC, their system is a prime example of the success that innovation can bring. Solutions that get results like these result from strong partnerships and teamwork between the user organization and the information system provider.

“It's not just compliance; it's not just technology. It's Sphera as a whole that we value,” Knable says. “They're willing to sit down, work with you and come up with a solution for whatever challenges you. There's a lot to Comply Plus. There's probably more functions to it than we really need right now. But we realize the value of it more and more and use more of it all the time. That's the real value.”