Solution to a New EH&S Software Problem

EH&S departments can invest years of data entry effort in its Environmental, Health, and safety data tracking and reporting software, only to have the provider go out of business or drop the product. Developer A V Systems can convert all the EH&S data into its MIRS™ package, helping your facility maintain compliance without breaking the bank.

The environmental, health and safety software market has undergone dramatic changes since compliance reporting legislation was first enacted in the late 1980s. The number of software packages available to manage environmental information increased dramatically through the following decade, as more organizations computerized data storage and management tasks. Today, there are an estimated 3000 commercial EHS software products on the market, ranging from simple report templates, to sophisticated, multi-million dollar management systems, fully integrated with in-house accounting and purchasing software systems.

While the proliferation of software packages has created greater choice for users, it has also created new pitfalls. The volatility of the EH&S software market has accelerated in recent years, with new mergers, acquisitions, and failures every month. The January-February 2002 issue of Donley Technology's EH&S Software News announced two new EH&S packages and four acquisitions of existing packages.

Now that the industrial sector has grown dependent on software to store and manage environmental, health and safety data, changes to the software package's availability or operability have considerable effect. How does the company remain compliant, without undermining productivity and without huge financial outlay?

When the software provider has gone out of business, or stops supporting the package, you, the EH&S software user, must choose one of two courses of action. The first is to search for a new package and implement it. The second is to continue to use the unsupported software until an external factor, such as incompatibility with corporate computer systems, necessitates its replacement. At that point, a new question arises - what about the thousands of chemical inventory records and MSDSs that populate your system? As most EH&S professionals know, the real value of the EH&S system is not measured by the initial software investment, but the data entered into the system over the years.

One environmental compliance software developer, with the help of a former competitor, has solved the "suffer or start over" dilemma for EH&S Software users. In 1998, A V Systems, long-time developer of **MIRS™** (Material Inventory Report System), partnered with Achieve! Technology (commonly known as OSHA-Soft, Inc.) to offer data conversion programs to more than 400 clients who had purchased Achieve's defunct Tier reporting and MSDS management software. Because the OSHA-Soft program utilized proprietary databases, a conversion program was necessary to salvage data from the system. The president of the former Achieve! Technology Corporation worked with developers at A V Systems to create the data conversion program to move data from the OSHA-Soft program into A V's **MIRS™** software. The data conversion program was then marketed to OSHA-Soft clients, with much success.

Since the official partnership with Achieve! Technology, A V has expanded its EHS data conversion programs to cover other EH&S software packages.

One of the largest EH&S data conversions A V Systems has performed to date, was for Nichols Aluminum. Nichols Aluminum, which operates five facilities in four states, is a leading manufacturer of coated and mill finish aluminum sheet for a wide variety of markets. For four years, Nichols Aluminum had used a popular software package to track chemical inventory,

manage MSDSs, and create reports for SARA compliance. Then, the software provider sold its EH&S application to another provider, and the new provider soon announced that it would no longer support the old platform. Clients were offered the opportunity to upgrade to the new company's application platform, for a sizeable fee. At the same time, the quality of technical support available for the software deteriorated greatly. Nichols chose that opportunity to begin the search for a new hazardous chemical management program.

After a careful review of leading EH&S software packages, Nichols Aluminum purchased the **MIRS™** software package. "A V Systems' data conversion ability was integral to the decision to implement **MIRS™**," stated Gary Stimpson, Division Environmental Manager for Nichols Aluminum. Mr. Stimpson estimates that 3000-3500 MSDSs were converted from the old software system into **MIRS™**. Based on published rates of $10-$14 per MSDS for data entry, the conversion resulted in an estimated cost savings of $35,000-$49,000 for Nichols Aluminum. According to Mr. Stimpson, the total cost of the data conversion, combined with the purchase of **MIRS™** modules, was significantly lower than the $103,000 cost quoted to upgrade the first software package to the new platform.

Three years after first targeting potential data conversion clients, this segment now comprises about 10% of A V's client base. "Being in the environmental data management business for more than 20 years, A V Systems has outlived many of its competitors. We've seen dozens of EHS software providers leave the business. Because of this, we've been able to perfect the conversion process through our broad experience converting data from various packages," stated Andrew Rudnik, President and founder of A V Systems.

The list of software packages from which A V Systems has converted data includes CHEMTOX®, EHS/Lifecycle, HAZ/TRAK, HAZOX, HITS, OSHA-Soft, Rainbow MSDS, and others.

Contact a representative of A V Systems, Inc. at 734-973-3000 or via email at mirs@MIRSinfo.com. A V Systems has been developing high quality, easy-to-use EH&S software since 1988. AVS' MIRS™ software has been the choice of companies such as Ford Motor Company, General Motors, U.S. Department of Defense, Kraft Foods, Campbell Soup Company and hundreds of others.