Is there a Broken Link?

With supply chains strung across the developing world, how can the chemical industry ensure that the end product is safe?

by Gail Krantzberg and Peter Topalovic

In 1996, 80 Haitian children died from ingesting cough syrup tainted with diethylene glycol (DEG), a chemical commonly found in antifreeze. An investigation conducted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found that Pharval, a local company that produced the cough syrup products Afebril and Valodon, did not contaminate the product at its site. Instead, a supposedly pharmaceutical-grade-shipment of glycerin, a key component in the most widely prescribed cough syrup in the country, was contaminated at its source in China. However, the Haitian company was under the assumption that the chemical was produced in Germany by VOS BV, owned by chemical giant Helm AG. According to a 1997 article in the World Press Review, Pharval felt that it didn’t have to implement any quality controls on the imported product because of its presumed European origin.

Is BP the New Bhopal?

How Crises Set The Policy Agenda*

by Robert W. Slater

This article explores how critical events can be turning points in defining policy agendas for both the private and public sectors and for civil society. First, the article describes the general way that licenses to operate are awarded to enterprises. Then it examines why a significant operational failure—a crisis—gets so much attention and how short- and long-term changes emerge from the wreckage. The Bhopal and Gulf BP incidents are used as case studies.

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