

3M Canada

Background

3M is a global company with 1997 sales of \$US15.1 billion. It has operations in 61 countries and employs more than 74,000 people worldwide, who manufacture and market about 50,000 products serving industrial, commercial and consumer markets. About half of the company's total sales come from 3M subsidiaries outside the U.S..

Established in 1951 and with its head office and original manufacturing site in London, Ontario, 3M Canada has six other plants in Ontario and one in Manitoba. 3M Canada employs nearly 2,000 Canadians, had 1997 sales of \$787.8 million and assets of \$479 million.

3M Canada manufactures a wide range of products, including aggregate materials, coated and non-woven abrasives, adhesives, fluorochemicals, microscopic glass bubble filler-extenders, health care products, micro-encapsulated products, pressure-sensitive tapes, respiratory protection products, sealants and coatings, and stain repellents. Innovation and product development are important to 3M's success.

3M Canada exports up to 80 per cent of its production to the US and other 3M subsidiaries in about 30 other countries, primarily Europe, South and Central America, and the Far East. It also imports a significant volume of product from 3M companies to sell in Canada.

Environmental Issues

Air emissions, particularly volatile organic solvents (VOCs), have been 3M Canada's major challenge and their reduction has received top priority in its environmental planning. VOCs are a challenge because the coating technologies used to make many of its products have traditionally involved petroleum-based solvents, similar in composition to paint thinner, which are needed to dissolve and apply these coatings. During the drying process, these solvents evaporate and, unless controlled, become air emissions.

In addition to air emissions, 3M, like many other companies, faces the challenge of reducing a wide variety of wastes from its processes, including energy and solid wastes.

3M Canada addresses the environmental requirements of several key stakeholder groups. First, the parent company and other 3M subsidiaries throughout the world are 3M Canada's largest export customers. Meeting the environmental goals established by 3M globally is an important factor in the willingness of the parent to continue buying 3M Canada's products and investing in new manufacturing capacity in Canada. Second, there is growing evidence that customers, particularly those in Europe, will be expecting suppliers to have an Environmental Management System or ISO 14000 certification in place in the