

To date, no systematic effort seems to have been made to identify the sites where releases pose a significant risk to human health or to the environment. Since Mexico is likely to face a substantial problem with existing hazardous waste contamination, the "voluntary fund" may not be adequate for a significant number of comprehensive clean-up operations.

A 1983 agreement between the U.S. and Mexico provides for the return to the U.S. of hazardous wastes generated by the approximately 2,000 "maquiladora" plants in Mexico. However, complete information is lacking on the number of maquiladoras that generate hazardous waste, in what quantities it is generated, and the final disposition of the contaminated materials. The two countries are presently co-operating on the collection of this information.

G. PESTICIDES AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

In Mexico, pesticides, fertilizers and toxic substances are regulated by the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection (the Law), the Law on Plant and Animal Protection and the General Health Law. Regulations cover the manufacture, formulation, packaging, labelling, use and disposal of such substances. If the product is banned in the country of manufacture or preparation, importation into Mexico is generally prohibited. Pesticide and chemical products must be registered and importers and exporters must obtain permits in order to trade. Mexico relies to a large extent on the health, safety and environmental data and risk analysis of the country of origin and of the international community.

The Law gives the federal government authority over "high risk" industries, businesses and services. These are so designated because of the chemicals they handle. These activities must be located in specially approved zones and submit accident prevention plans to SEDESOL for approval. Mexico's law authorizes seizures or shutdowns "when there exists an imminent threat to the ecological balance, or ... dangerous repercussions for the ecosystems, their components, or the public health" New high-risk facilities must undergo a risk analysis as well as an environmental impact review before they can be built.

H. WATER POLLUTION

Mexico's federal statutory requirements for water pollution control are broad. The country's water pollution regime is under development and thus far the emphasis has been on the elaboration of a basic regulatory system for municipal waste-water treatment. Mexico has not yet designated water quality criteria for the uses of every stream segment in the country.

Mexico's water regime controls many types of sources, limiting effluents using a technology-based approach. It also provides for the setting of water quality standards and consideration of the assimilative capacity of a water body to determine specific limits for individual discharge points. Mexico uses registration and permit programs to manage and control discharges and involves state and municipal governments in the development and enforcement of certain aspects of the water pollution control program.