

AIR LIQUIDE • Cont'd from page 1

The expansion takes place against a background of rapidly increasing demand in the U.S. and Canada where the market for H_2O_2 has been growing by 10 to 15 per cent per year since 1989. Industry experts expect that trend to continue until at least the year 2000.

A whiter shade of pale

Part of that growth has come through diversification of uses. Traditional customers for H_2O_2 include manufacturers of specialty chemicals as well as the textile industry, which uses the compound both to produce a high level of whiteness in fabrics and as a dye fixative. And there are a host of more familiar applications. Some can be found as close as the medicine cabinet where hydrogen peroxide is used



in contact lens cleaning solutions, hair bleach and as a topical antiseptic for skin cuts and scrapes.

Newer uses, most of them developed over the past decade, cover a broad spectrum of industry. They include applications in industrial and municipal wastewater treatment, the production of drinkable water, and the cleanup of contaminated soil water. The mining, electronics and metal processing industries are also using hydrogen peroxide increasingly to replace highly toxic process chemicals or to break down their residues into environmentally-friendly compounds. But the fastest

growth of all has come in the pulp and paper industry where hydrogen peroxide has benefited from the movement to replace chlorine gas as a bleaching agent. Currently, the pulp and paper industry accounts for roughly 55 per cent of the North American market for H_2O_2 .

The company's Bécancour plant started production in 1987. Since then, output by its 50-member workforce has grown steadily, from 20,000 tonnes per year at startup to 33,000 tonnes today.

Plant Director Bertrand Mollaret says that the two parent companies are expanding CHEMPROX to keep pace with the current surge in demand. With its new productive muscle and six additional employees, CHEMPROX will produce more than 73,000 tonnes of H_2O_2 . Fifty-Eight per cent of product will go to the pulp and paper industry.

Using processes developed by its French joint venture sister company, Oxysynthèse, CHEMPROX has set the world pace for quality production of H_2O_2 and was the first hydrogen peroxide producer in the world to win International Standard ISO 9002 certification. The expanded plant will make use of even more sophisticated Oxysynthèse control and instrumentation technology.

Mollaret adds that the plant expansion will help Air Liquide/Elf Altochem realize its goal of remaining the fourth largest H_2O_2 producer in the world with 9 to 10 per cent of the global market. In addition to the Quebec operation, the two corporations operate H_2O_2 joint venture plants in France, Germany and Japan. ♦

Why CHEMPROX chose Quebec

Ron Paradis, Marketing Director of CHEMPROX Chemical Inc., says that Air Liquide/Elf Altochem selected the province of Quebec as the site of its plant for several competitive advantages.

"One was the availability of a highly skilled, stable and motivated workforce. Another was the availability of a secure and low-cost supply of a key raw material in the production of hydrogen peroxide, namely hydrogen gas, which we source from a neighbouring chloralkali plant in the industrial park at Bécancour.

"A third key element was logistics. From a competitive point of view, eastern Canada offered excellent access via rail, road and water transportation to markets inland and overseas.

"CHEMPROX has found Canada and the province of Quebec to have progressive industrial policies and initiatives which, in practice, have enhanced our overall competitiveness and opportunities for growth. And a favourable Canadian exchange rate accentuates these advantages.

"Added to these benefits is our location close to North America's industrial heartland. Until 1987, when CHEMPROX began operations, our parent companies had been supplying the Canadian and U.S. markets from their joint venture plant in Jarrie, France. With NAFTA in place, Quebec is a good regional fit with developing markets for H_2O_2 in North America."

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