

Caring for the Environment

*Shri Dheeraj Kaul

We live in a beautiful world. Imagine if we cannot venture out on a sunny day to enjoy the sunshine people have enjoyed for countless centuries, because of the fear of danger from Ultra violet rays. We will be all the more unhappy when we realise we are to be blamed for it. Take a moment to think whether our actions are causing concern for the health and safety of ourselves, our employees and humanity itself. Our actions and practices have been affecting the environment we live in more and more. For example, weather extremes have become the order of the day. Scientists across the world have confirmed that human actions are directly responsible for the rapid change in climate which is a growing concern the world over. Likewise, in the recent past, the depletion of the ozone layer has been of great international concern.

The earth is protected from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation of the sun by a thin layer of Ozone. This layer is being destroyed by emissions of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) and one such example is Carbon tetrachloride (CTC), a popular solvent and cleaning agent. The accelerated rate at which we are destroying the natural ecosystem by use of solvents of our choice without considering their abusive effects on our own life support systems is nothing short of suicidal. In the same way as we sacrifice our ecosystem for short term gains, we accelerate the destruction of the ozone layer. This degrades the availability of many natural resources human beings will always need to depend upon for survival. Many of us make great sacrifices so that our children can attend the best schools, yet we barely give a thought to the environment in which our children will blossom. Is it not a paradox that we can be law-abiding, peace-loving, tolerant, committed to freedom and true to our values and still behave in ways that are biologically suicidal?

Since the evidence of ozone depletion was strong and the stakes were high, the international community signed a Protocol proposing a specific phase-out schedule for ODS. (Signed at Montreal, Proklima analyses the industrial requirements, identifies suitable alternatives and evaluates their cost and performance. In essence, GTZ-Proklima endeavours to enable industries to take informed decisions on the substitution of CTC.

The depletion of the Ozone layer and its consequences on earth is a major environmental challenge and economic issue we face today. Let us give this critical matter a deep thought and not ignore the environment in which we live. We can demonstrate that there is a cleaner way to doing business and that using alternative solvents can also be profitable.

Canada; hence the name Montreal Protocol). The Protocol came into being on September 16, 1987 (September 16 is now International Ozone Day), and till date 189 countries have become its signatories. Developed countries banned the use of ODS like CFC, CTC etc. and even advanced the phase out by four years because of the severity of the effects of ozone depletion. The effects of ozone depletion allow the harmful UV rays to reach earth's surface, causing diseases such as skin cancer, eye cataract and suppression of the immune system in us human beings. Besides, it also has harmful effects on fish and other ocean life, causing an imbalance in the aquatic ecosystem, thus affecting us indirectly. Ever since CTC came into industrial use there have also been serious health concerns as high exposure to CTC can cause damage to the lungs, liver, kidneys and the central nervous system.

As a signatory to the Montréal Protocol, India has begun the phase-out of CTC by curtailing the production and consumption of this substance by 85% on 1, January 2005. It will be phased out from the market, totally, by the end of 2009 (except for so called "feedstock uses" in which CTC will be further processed and can no longer harm the ozone layer). As a result, thousands of small scale industries across India have begun to face a shortage of CTC supply.



There is no universal replacement for CTC available in the market. For certain applications, answers may already be available through industries that have successfully adopted alternatives. Many other applications still require research

to develop technically mature and economically viable processes that need to be tailored to the specific requirement of each application. In today's competitive business environment, small industries may not have the luxury of time and resources to find the right alternative for CTC by trial and error.

To address this concern, GTZ-Proklima, mandated by the Governments of Germany and France, is offering free-of-charge technical assistance to industries in India to identify appropriate substitutes for CTC. GTZ-Yes, our small act of "Caring for the Environment" can heal and save our planet Earth. With growing environmental awareness, willingness to change and a belief in the future, we all can be instrumental in making our world a better place.

In case you are using CTC in your industry and might be interested in any information on the substitution for the same, please feel free to forward your enquiries to us at: ctcphaseout@airtelbroadband.in and we will be happy to assist you free of charge. For more information, please visit our website: www.ctc-phaseout.org