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**BROTHERTON**

The community newsletter of Brotherton Speciality Products Limited

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# Ready, willing & able: to handle any problem

**'P**revention is better than cure' is a phrase most people who read this newsletter will be familiar with. And it has an extra resonance at Brotherton.

As a COMAH (Control Of Major Accident Hazards) site, Brotherton has a duty to provide the highest level of protection to all persons and the

environment likely to be affected by an incident involving potentially hazardous substances.

The company also subscribes to the CIA (Chemical Industries Association) 'Responsible Care' initiative - a worldwide pledge to continual improvement in all aspects of health, safety and environmental performance.

Backing up these commitments involves more than a simple sign-up and certification policy.

In the very unlikely event of a problem developing, Brotherton need to know the systems are effective. But how does one train for an emergency situation without actually having experienced it?

The answer lies in a regular series of real-life drills and 'table top' exercises, in conjunction with the emergency services.



Brotherton's Safety, Health & Environment Officer, Alan Tann (right), is pictured during a briefing with a local fire crew.

The backbone of the company's safety strategy is an off-site emergency plan - which is reviewed and updated every three years - twinned with theoretical and practical scenarios undertaken with the Fire Brigade and local authority - the last of which involved 16 fire tenders.

Every aspect of site safety is tested to the limit. Staff vigilance is also maintained at an optimum level by a comprehensive training programme and internal awareness campaigns.

## Awareness

"Because of the high level of safety built into everything we do, we are fortunate never to have had to test the systems for real," confirmed Brotherton's Managing Director, Roger Perry. "Much of our equipment has up to five different levels of protection built-in.

"These drills form a vital part of a protection policy that extends to all our commercial and domestic neighbours.

"The on-going safety and welfare of the local community is paramount in everything we do."

## INSIDE: COULD YOU LIVE WITHOUT CHEMICALS?

Produced on behalf of Brotherton Speciality Products Limited, Calder Vale Road, Wakefield, WF1 5PH.  
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Wakefield was fortunate to escape the worst of this year's flooding and I am happy to report that Brotherton was unaffected by the torrential downpour.



However, despite not having any problems to contend with, we were ever-vigilant as always.

River levels were monitored around the clock and our emergency flood plan was put into action.

This meant securing anything that was likely to float - thereby reducing the risk of pollution or adding to the debris that such deluges of water collect as they sweep on their way.

Our Calder Vale Road site is protected by the latest flood defence system put in place by the Environment Agency only a few years ago, which is designed to protect our area of Wakefield under such adverse conditions.

Although the unusually high rainfall did cause the water level to rise substantially, it was contained without posing any serious threat to us. That in itself was very reassuring, when one bears in mind the horrendous flooding that blighted many other parts of the county.

Despite the severity of the situation, it is pleasing to be able to report that we were never in any real danger of being compromised.

Even if the freak conditions were repeated for a more sustained period, we now know we have the capacity to cope and that our staff have proved they are capable of responding quickly and effectively.

Roger Perry  
Managing Director

# Could you live without chemicals for 24 hours?

That was the question (see headline), Yorkshire Chemical Focus\* posed to groups of volunteers when it held a special one day challenge recently.

It highlighted the indispensable role they play in our everyday lives, challenging individuals from all walks of life to manage for 24 hours without using any product produced by, or utilising, chemicals.

Volunteers were each given a table of 'lifestyle points' and every time they used something dependent on chemicals, they added the relevant points to their total.

People from across the UK took part, with prizes awarded for those who accumulated the minimum number of points by the end of the day.

They had to explain what they had learned from the challenge, which focused on four main categories: essential living, work, lifestyle, and luxuries.

**Cakes, computers, cosmetics and mobile phones are among the items we would find it hardest to survive with-**



Not surprisingly, the main thing participants couldn't manage without was water (purified using chemicals), or food (which has been grown using fertilisers or pesticides and transported using fuel). Eighty five per cent of those who took part also found it impossible to give up moisturiser, cakes, the internet and their mobile phones.

The top five items from each of the categories that the volunteers found they couldn't live without were:

- **Essential living** - water, food, clothing, personal hygiene products, medication.
- **Work** - travel, computer, paper, telephone, pen.
- **Lifestyle** - television, music, mobile phone, internet, newspapers & magazines.
- **Luxuries** - moisturiser, makeup, jewellery, exotic food & wine, cakes.

When the points were added up, the winner was Robert Daley, a Bathroom Showroom Manager from Keighley. He accumulated 74 points during the 24 hours, during which he enjoyed a frozen yoghurt, fizzy pop, bought a new wrist-watch and spent part of his working day mixing paint.

"Working at a builder's merchants I'm around chemicals in paints and treated wood all day," commented Robert. "Doing this has made me realise we take chemicals for granted without even realising it."

Robert chose a helicopter flight for his prize, which will also use a wide range of chemicals!

Dr Jane Mockford, Chief Executive Officer of Yorkshire Chemical Focus, added: "people found it incredibly difficult. Most of the participants had no idea what a big part chemicals play in their everyday lives and it's proved to them that there's a very positive aspect to the chemicals industry they don't often hear about.

"The challenge showed that, on average, people make use of 52 chemicals and chemical processes each day."

Here are what some of the other participants who took part in the trial had to say about how difficult it was:

**Maeve Baker, Administrator** - "Chemicals have improved our quality of life and we all need to be aware of how much we depend on them on a daily basis."

**Michele Smale, Teacher** - "Trying to live without chemicals in modern times is totally unrealistic. We've come to rely on the chemical industry without realising it."

**Matt Grist, Student** - "I've learned from this challenge that nearly everything we use contains chemicals."

**Peter Reineck, Chemical Industry Consultant** - "This initiative shows that there are some chemicals, without which, our way of life as we know it simply couldn't continue."

**Danielle Lindley, Account Executive** - "I knew that chemicals were in just about everything but I never gave it much thought. Without chemicals, life would not be the same and certainly not as much fun!"

\* Formed in 2005, Yorkshire Chemical Focus (YCF), is a not-for-profit industry-led membership organisation to support and promote Yorkshire's £2.2 billion chemical sector.

## The perfect 'solution' for a sticky problem

Every time you put on a pair of shoes, there's a very good chance they'll have a Brotherton connection...

The company's Italian distributors, Sistemi Trattamento Superfici, have developed a unique 'Aquasole' system, to clean polymer soles before they are applied to the rest of the shoes.

Using water-based cleaners manufactured by Brotherton, the rotational washing system

removes the release agent that allows the soles to be ejected from their moulds. If any traces were to remain, the soles would be unable to effectively sewed or glued to the upper material.



The machine (above), is so cleverly designed that all the washing, rinsing and drying takes place inside a single chamber and the aqueous solutions used are completely eco-friendly.

So popular has the system proved, that most of the shoes you will find at the top high street retailers will have benefited from it.

Aquasole is already in widespread use in the main Mediterranean shoe centres (Italy, Spain etc), as well as China, India and North Africa - with one factory using it to help produce up to a quarter of a million pairs of soles every day!

Interestingly, Brotherton's 'Armex' blast media also has a part to play: cleaning the moulds themselves to prevent a build-up of residue when the soles are hot injected.

# Three month contract that lasted 30 years!

**P**roduction Foreman, John Sparham, joined Brotherton on a three-month temporary contract, but stayed a little longer...

Thirty years later he's the company's second longest-serving employee, responsible for overseeing the manufacture of ammonia-based products, 'fine chemicals' and specialist cleaning materials such as Armex.

John's colleague, Simon Sewell, fulfils the equivalent role for 'organics' and products produced under Brotherton's partnership agreement with Italian-based Esesco. Between them they control a team of 20 staff, working around the clock seven days a week.

Looking back with a wry smile, John explained how he first came into contact with Brotherton back in the 70s: "I was a Pipe-fitter and was offered a few months' work. When the short-term contract expired, a vacancy arose to join the fitting team full-time and I jumped at the chance.

"There were 13 of us in those days and I was heavily involved in installing a lot of new plant and equipment as the company expanded its facilities."

John went on to become Fitting Shop Foreman and switched to his present job in the early 1990s.

"My job is to react to customer orders: ensuring production schedules dovetail with delivery times,

ordering raw materials, supervising production and checking quality prior to despatch," he outlined.

John (and Simon), form a vital link between the office and manufacturing sides of the business, using their expertise to solve any problems and keep the production processes running smoothly.

"Breakdowns, permits for engineering work and the maintenance of plant and equipment also come under my remit," John went on.

John attributes the reason he has notched up such an impressive long-service record down to the friendly nature of working life at Brotherton.

"It's has always been a relatively small company and there has always been a good rapport amongst the workforce," he ventured. "I have witnessed a lot of changes during my time here, but most of them have been for the better."

## Computerisation

One of those changes is the increasing use of computers to control the manufacturing processes.

"As well as providing a sophisticated means of control for the manufacturing processes, they have radically improved the working links between each department," John stated. "Good internal communication is vital for a company to succeed.

"Even routine tasks like address labels, which all had to be done manually not long ago, can be output at the touch of a button. When you've 300 containers to send to the other side of the world, that represents some time saving."

Outside work, John has not let the grass grow under his feet either. He and his wife, Annette, regularly holiday on the Devon & Cornwall coast, where at the age of 55 he relishes the opportunity to go surfing.

"I started body-boarding in my forties," he revealed, "and you can't beat the feeling of riding a wave for up to 200 yards when the surf's up!"

At the same time as clocking up 30 years with Brotherton, John also celebrated his 30th wedding anniversary with Annette this year. Adding to the family celebrations was their son, Luke, who obtained a history degree at Leeds University.



Production Foreman, John Sparham, is Brotherton's second longest-serving employee.