

# Even the Contents of Windex Considered Hazardous, Says 3E CEO

## Carlsbad Firm Helps Businesses Comply With OSHA Requirements

BY JULIE GALLANT

Handling hazardous materials and managing regulatory compliance are necessary evils in the workplace.

Carlsbad-based 3E Co. is one of the few firms that gladly manages the tasks.

3E has slowly built a foundation on providing environmental health and safety compliance services since its inception in 1988. It's only been within the last two years the company has reaped the fruits of its labor.

The company's employee count has doubled in size to 300 compared with 160 in 2004, with more than 22 staffers hired within the last few months. Revenues have jumped from \$18 million two years ago to an anticipated \$46 million to \$50 million this year. Revenue for 2005 was reported at \$34 million.

Robert Christie, 3E president and chief executive officer, said the company is expected to grow an additional 30 to 50 percent this year.

"The biggest challenge is managing the growth," said Christie, who is tasked with moving executive staff to its new corporate headquarters. "It's harder to manage hyper-growth as opposed to a company that's downsizing."

Christie attributes at least half the revenue growth to 3E's existing customer base of between 8,000 and 9,000 customers involved in diverse industries worldwide.



3ECo. Staff at 3E Co.'s HazMat Mission Control Center in Carlsbad responds to 10,000 calls a week.

Customers who need hazardous waste management services run the gamut of retailers such as Home Depots, auto repair outlets and lumberyards to manufacturers that handle chemicals, food products and pharmaceuticals.

## **Staff Stays Busy**

Hazardous materials are too numerous to list. Even the contents of a bottle of Windex are considered hazardous, said Christie. With offices in Bethesda, Md.; Kingsport, Tenn.; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Japan, 3E handles the bulk of its around-the-clock services from its HazMat Mission Control Center, staffed by 130 employees in Carlsbad.

The facility houses emergency response specialists and a hazardous materials response team. The staff systematically fields thousands of calls every month from clients who either have a hazardous materials emergency or have routine questions about storing, labeling and reporting materials to meet environmental regulations.

"California has taken a large lead position in monitoring companies and making sure they are compliant," said Christie, explaining that state and national authorities as well as European and Asian agencies are under increased pressure to enforce regulations.

The heart of the HazMat Mission Control Center is a huge online database of material safety data sheets that keep track of all the chemicals and hazardous products being stored by 3E's customers. About 2 million data sheets are maintained in the system.

Beth Lindskog, 3E service integration specialist, said the data sheets help companies comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's policy that employers maintain a list of hazardous materials and their potential health risks in case of exposure. Data sheet contents include product names, manufacturers, ingredients and parts numbers.

"Customers can contract with us for the on-site inventory program or they can submit the information to us," Lindskog said.

The data sheet's effectiveness expanded with 3E's acquisition of Ariel Research Corp. in November 2004. Along with managing inventories, 3E now has access to Ariel's global regulatory records that cover which chemicals are regulated by various agencies worldwide.

The control center fields more than 10,000 calls every week from clients who have a need to tap into these records and 3E's services.

## **Emergency Response**

Melinda Krupczynski, 3E customer support supervisor, said when a chemical spill results in a medical emergency, the data sheets are transmitted to the client via its online service and a call is made to California Poison Control. 3E's HazMat Response Team gives cleanup advice and its emergency responders may dispatch a crew to the site.

Most of the calls, about 40,000 a month, are for incidental spills that can be handled routinely, but about four or five emergency calls are received every day.

Jeff Kacirek, manager of 3E's HazMat Response Team, said employees at the site of a spill are often trained to handle their own emergencies, but they'll call 3E so the incident call can be monitored and the appropriate agencies are notified.

3E Vice President of Operations Linda Allen said sometimes the staff contacts chief executives if a severe incident occurs at their business.

"If there's a catastrophe, they want to know about it before they hear about it in the morning news," Allen said.

Routine business is handled in 3E's regulatory department, where staff processes compliance forms and pays regulatory fees on behalf of its clients. All documents related to air-quality permits, storm-water permits and underground storage tank requirements are filtered through the office.

"We don't manage their compliance," Christie said. "We manage the products for them and enable them to be compliant. Our job is to go through all the changes in the regulations. We can tell you what the regulations are and the data behind it."