Plumbing With DataPipe™ Software Provides a Varied Toolbox

By Kevin Santee

DataPipe is another in a long list of software packages designed to help manage EH&S information. It stands out from the competition because of its size and diversity. Like the plumber who needs sufficient tools to complete the job, DataPipe offers more than 100 modules covering the areas of environmental, safety and occupational health.

DataPipe is a database-driven application consisting of a core system that can be run in a Web environment, on a network or on an individual personal computer. The modules, which are purchased separately, can be loosely divided into three categories:

- environmental
- occupational health and medical
- IH and safety

Each category has modules for general management, such as employee summaries, medical restrictions, training tracking and project management. The remaining modules cover technical programs: waste management, chemical tracking, medical case management, driving information, noise exposure, indoor air quality, PPE, workers' compensation and many more.

No matter which modules are installed, the application interface will closely resemble a Windows® Explorer screen. A vertical frame on the left side of the screen displays modules and topics as directory trees while the main frame displays the form that was selected. Data can be entered manually or imported and exported directly from external devices. Instrument-specific drivers must be installed to permit data importing from sampling devices.

Handheld Tools

A similar interface can also be enabled to allow communication between DataPipe and portable devices such as the Pocket PC, Palm Pilot or Tablet PC. Forms developed in DataPipe can be downloaded to a PDA for input in the field. The resulting data can later be uploaded from the PDA back into DataPipe with the formatting intact.

Information from some modules can also be linked to other modules. For instance, an injury/illness incident can be linked to an incident report. DataPipe is also reportedly compatible with outside systems such as HR applications to permit interfacing with other corporate information.

While information is entered through standard forms, the form designer feature allows the user to develop new forms. It includes a language converter that can translate English forms to Spanish, Chinese or other languages. Multiple forms can be opened simultaneously in DataPipe to

multitask input. Graphics, video or text files can also be added to DataPipe and associated with a project as an attachment. All notes entered are date, time and user stamped.

Aside from exporting raw data, output occurs through standardized or customized reports. Many reports regulated by standards such as OSHA 200, EPA Form R and SARA Tier I come pre-developed with the DataPipe system. Other reports can be created as needed, in an ad hoc fashion. Data fields, data labels and rules for filtering the information are selected in a query-like format. The resulting information can be printed in a simple fashion or as a fancy display using a Crystal Reports option. The information can also be exported to a Microsoft Excel® file or e-mailed using the advanced reporting feature.

E-mailing can also be set up automatically. Using a feature called Post Save Trigger, the application can be set to automatically e-mail alerts or perform similar tasks at specific times. Security permissions in DataPipe can be set like any database to limit individuals or groups to specific modules, forms or other portions of the application.

Since this review is based on a Web demonstration of the safety module, no comment can be offered about actual hands-on operation of the application. However, it appears that DataPipe clearly offers a wide variety of data management tools for the EH&S professional without appearing to be overly complicated.

For more information on DataPipe, visit Knorr Associates Inc. at www.knorrassociates.com.

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