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Quick response in case of chemical accident Citizens to gain access to joint substance database operated by Federal Government and *Laender*

Up-to-date, quick and reliable information on chemical substances and their environmental impact is important for the sake of environmental protection and when fire departments and the police must avert danger. A database on substances jointly operated by the Germany's federal government and the *Laender* *Gemeinsamen Stoffdatenpool Bund/Länder*, or GSBL, has been in place since 1995. With immediate effect, the data on some 400,000 chemical substances have been improved and made available on the Internet to the public. On 28 May 2009 the two GSBL partners announced the launch of their new online application. Eight *Laender* and the Federal Government operate a central substance information search application. The data can be accessed via the Internet from anywhere that is connected to the web. The general public will now have direct and free access to GSBL.

GSBL is Germany's largest and most important substance database. There is a listing of 480 features of substance properties and governing legislation on some 400,000 substances. The information is displayed as facts such as test results, and it describes measures to be taken, e.g. in the event of an accident. Both experts and laymen will find the substance descriptions to be easy to understand. Full access to the application is granted to all state and municipal authorities of associated partners. There is a public use version for the general public whose portal can be used for researching data.

The GSBL cooperation between the federal government and the *Laender* has a longstanding tradition, as the two have managed a joint pool of data on substances since 1995. An agreement about the search application has been in effect since 1998. Environmental associations make use of GSBL to monitor trade and health and safety at the workplace, or in the area of disposal of hazardous substances. The scientific community appreciates the high standards of relevant and up-to-date information. GSBL has also served in danger prevention with its quick information system on hazardous substances (GSA), for example in cases of natural disasters, accidents, or damages owing to these substances. Operational staff such as fire departments and the police are key institutions that use GSBL.

For more information see www.gsbl.de.

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