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EU Ecolabel Product Group: Lubricants



'The EU Ecolabel means we can give marine operators complete peace of mind that by using BIOGEN WIRESHIELD® on wire ropes and armoured umbilicals they will be fully VGP compliant.'

Gareth Procter, Marine and Offshore Business Development Manager at ROCOL

Why did Rocol apply for the EU Ecolabel?

Based in Leeds, ROCOL's origins date back to 1878 when Victor Ragsine developed a lubricating oil which was subsequently sold throughout Europe. Unlike other lubricating methods available at the time, the yellow oil was virtually non-corrosive.

ROCOL is now part of ITW (Illinois Tool Works Inc), a multi-national US owned company, which develops, manufactures and markets technically advanced industrial lubricants and line marking systems to industries worldwide. ITW is a Fortune 500 company and had revenues totalled \$17.0 billion in 2012.

Although the company has changed a great deal since 1878, its ethos and aim remains the same - to create highly technical products of superior quality to the competition, with performance that its customers can trust.

Following the introduction of the Vessel General Permit (VGP) in December 2013 by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), operators in US coastal waters must use only Environmentally Acceptable Lubricants (EALs) in all oil-to-sea interfaces. By definition EALs must be minimally toxic, biodegradable and non-bio accumulative.

So the big question for ROCOL was: 'How do we prove to our customers that our BIOGEN WIRESHIELD product is an EAL?' The answer was the EU Ecolabel, as lubricant products awarded the EU Ecolabel meet the USEPA's definition of an Environmentally Acceptable Lubricant.

ROCOL's Product Manager, Louise Holt, explains: *'The main business driver for having the EU Ecolabel was clear. The presence of the EU Ecolabel Flower on ROCOL's BIOGEN WIRESHIELD product guarantees that our customers will be in compliance with the legal requirements of the Vessel General Permit. ROCOL also anticipate that other countries will follow the USA's example in the years to come and set equally stringent requirements on lubricant use in their coastal waters.'*

The Application Process

Louise continues: *'The application process for the EU Ecolabel was straight forward, with a well laid out application form and a step-by-step guide available online. It is definitely a good idea to contact UK Ecolabel Delivery as early as possible during the application process, as they were able to offer a lot of support and advice throughout.'*

ROCOL's research team spent three years developing its BIOGEN WIRESHIELD product to meet the stringent EU Ecolabel criteria. The effort invested at the product development stage was rewarded as ROCOL's application was thorough and comprehensive; allowing the EU Ecolabel to be awarded shortly after the application was submitted for assessment.

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EU Ecolabel Products

ROCOL was awarded its EU Ecolabel licence in October 2014 for its BIOGEN WIRESHIELD product and is part of its Industrial Products range. Its EU Ecolabel licence number is UK/027/013.

The BIOGEN WIRESHIELD product is manufactured in a two stage process, a hot stage and a cold stage. The hot stage takes place in temperature controlled vessels where the temperature is maintained at a set point for a fixed period of time.

The cold stage then occurs in large mixing bowls where further additives are blended to form the finished grease, which is packed into pails or barrels for distribution.

BIOGEN WIRESHIELD has been specifically designed for application to wire ropes and armoured ROV umbilicals with the safety of the marine environment in mind and as an Environmentally Acceptable Lubricant is defined as being:



1. Biodegradable - This is a measure of how quickly a lubricant would break down in to its harmless constituents if released into the sea. In the instance of accidental discharge, a biodegradable lubricant will not remain in the environment for long periods of time which limits the damage caused.
2. Minimally toxic - Eco-toxicity is a measure of how poisonous a lubricant would be if released into the sea. As described by the VGP, minimally toxic lubricants have little to no impact on marine life.
3. Non-bioaccumulative - When a bio-accumulative chemical is eaten, it will begin to build up in living tissues and cannot be excreted. At the bottom of the food chain this does not generally cause a problem, since the chemical has low eco-toxicity. However, as the chemical moves up the food chain, it increases in concentration to dangerous levels and can cause significant damage.

Results

Louise is keen to stress that product performance has not been compromised by 'going green' - performance testing to prove product efficacy is part of the EU Ecolabel application process. ROCOL's BIOGEN WIRESHIELD underwent wide ranging performance trials to demonstrate that it will either equal or outperform traditional mineral oil lubricants.

'Environmentally Acceptable Lubricants are often quoted as having reduced performance capabilities when compared to traditional mineral oil lubricants but the VGP has allowed us to focus on developing new technologies to improve performance with minimised impact on the environment.'

The EU Ecolabel provides ROCOL with independent verification of its product's environmental standard. The final word therefore comes from one of ROCOL's customers: *'Using a product such as BIOGEN WIRESHIELD means we are able to greatly extend the lifetime of our umbilicals, and we can avoid any long delays for umbilical repair or replacement whilst also respecting the environments in which we operate.'*

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