Most large companies experience difficulty in obtaining or understanding regulatory developments, according to a survey from EHS consultancy Enhesa. The majority of companies now use some kind of EHS management software platform to monitor their EHS performance, with the trends towards a more integrated approach to ensuring compliance.
WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES?
Companies face a steep challenge in keeping up with the growth of regulatory change, successfully managing risk, and addressing enforcement issues. Lack of time and resources, language barriers, and the difficulty of standardizing global programs can also slow the path to ongoing compliance. Enhesa is seeing substantial regulatory growth in Latin America and Africa, which stands in contrast to trends observed just two years ago. In North America and Europe, regulations continue to evolve and multiply. Keeping up with the pace of regulatory change in some countries can be hard to monitor. Companies may struggle to get a copy of the legislation, let alone understand the main requirements. EHS managers can be left wondering, “How is the legislation enforced and what is mandatory?” In addition, policymakers are under increasing pressure from external stakeholders, including consumers, to push through more stringent environmental regulations.

SIX STEPS TO COMPLIANCE
As the burden of keeping up with, understanding, and complying with EHS regulations increases, Enhesa and UL recommend following six steps:

1) IDENTIFY APPLICABLE EHS REGULATIONS
Allocate the responsibility for keeping up with changing regulations to someone specific within the business. Important points to consider include how many countries consolidate their regulations, which countries publish regulations in a language you understand, and which laws are applicable to your business. From there, do you understand the legal language? Do your corporate standards ensure compliance everywhere you operate? And how will proposed regulatory changes impact your facilities?

2) UNDERSTAND THE REGULATIONS AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS
Allocate the responsibility for keeping up with changing regulations to someone specific within the business. Important points to consider include how many countries consolidate their regulations, which countries publish regulations in a language you understand, and which

3) DETERMINE WHICH COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS ARE APPLICABLE TO YOU
Determine exactly what is applicable and which specific requirements affect your operations. It is important to identify jurisdiction-specific requirements and applicable EHS regulations. You can then run applicability assessments at the site level to further refine the ‘applicable list’. Further, continuing working towards compliance on an ongoing basis.

4) VERIFYING COMPLIANCE
There is a definite trend towards more frequent site self-assessments, with 78% of the companies responding to our survey indicating that facilities require EHS self assessments. It’s important to combine these assessments with a broader audit program.

5) ESTABLISH AN ONGOING COMPLIANCE PROCESS
Integrate regulatory demands into standard operating procedures, assign responsibilities to individuals, create escalation procedures to provide early warnings of non-compliances and train staff on what’s required. This is where making EHS management software integral to the process can prove highly useful.

6) TRACK AND MANAGE EMERGING EHS ISSUES
Being able to build a bigger picture overview of what is happening in all the countries where you operate is vital. It is important to understand how countries’ policies might influence regulations in the future. Change can happen quickly, so operating procedures should be continually reviewed against best practice.

HOW CAN AN EHS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE HELP?
Companies are increasingly embracing the benefits of moving to a centralized system in which a documented set of information is kept and can be accessed in real time. This enables EHS managers to take a more proactive role, responding immediately to issues as they arise. In addition, easier to use tools and more simplified reporting means people are more likely to report near misses. Software also allows you to set standards and expectations across the business and gives you the flexibility to meet key local legislative requirements such as RID-DOR or OSHA. We recommend a systematic approach to ensuring EHS compliance. Keeping audits and self assessments firmly front of mind, we advise streamlining EHS management and reporting by planning and implementing processes, responding to issues, and managing and reviewing performance. Integrating updates from EHS experts Enhesa directly into your system helps to ensure you stay on top of any relevant regulatory changes and allows you to quickly adapt your monitoring to tackle any new requirements. Within the PURE® Platform, for example, you can collect data across complex geographical region structures and business units. Using a survey editor, you can easily conduct assessments on-site, linking questions to help material and citations. It is also possible to build a scoring methodology within the system. Every
action is recorded, so there’s a full audit trail, and you can easily provide access to third party auditors.

Following conditional question paths, you can expand through a set of predefined questions. The system will guide you through the most relevant path for your assessment, depending on your answers. As part of an audit or self-assessment, you can raise and identify non-compliances, allocating a unique ID to each issue, uploading documents as part of the workflow and adding general observations. Similarly, users can add ad-hoc non-compliances using templates, which helps to determine the necessary corrective actions. You can configure mandatory items for approval and also trigger formal noncompliances for items such as a health and safety policy not signed by local management, for example. The system allows you to specify the corrective actions and involve other users. If they reply via email or text message, their responses can be logged in system, allowing for a more timely resolution to the issue. When responding to incidents, you can quickly assign responsibilities to people, upload supporting evidence, monitor their tasks and filter by type of action, using the system as a live database. EHS reporting can be simplified by creating branded templates within the system that can be exported as PDF, Word or Excel files. You can quickly look across your organizational hierarchy for given time periods, viewing audits, noncompliances or non-compliance categories to get an overview of assessments and corrective action plans. The PURE® Platform’s native mobile iOS apps can be used to channel information from site assessments straight into the system. Users can record data on site using the app, which syncs automatically as soon as it re-connects to the internet, speeding up the process and improving data accuracy. Finally, you can consolidate everything into a single compliance calendar, and filter by time, task or individual. You can quickly create a status report or use dashboards to drill down into specific data, harnessing the information to drive performance.

LOOKING AHEAD

As regulatory growth continues across the world, adopting a standardized, integrated approach to EHS management can help companies to reduce environmental risk, improve the health and safety of their employees and boost their overall EHS performance. In-depth insights on the relevance of changing regulatory requirements together with a robust EHS monitoring process and an advanced EHS management information system will be among the key elements of success as companies pursue the path to ongoing compliance.