

Evonik studies expansion

New construction could be worth \$65M

Essen, Germany-based Evonik Industries AG is presently studying the potential for the construction of a methyl mercaptan plant at its Evonik Degussa site in Theodore, Alabama.

Evonik Industries is the world's only company to produce and market all four main amino acids for animal nutrition: DL-methionine, L-lysine (Biolys®), L-threonine and L-tryptophan.

Dr. Klaus Engel, member of Evonik Industries executive board of responsible for the Chemicals Business Area, said: "Our methionine activities are a significant part of our specialty chemicals portfolio. By expanding backward integration, we seek to strengthen this business consistently further." The concept of backward integration includes supplying Evonik's DL-methionine plants with all key

intermediates such as acrolein and methyl mercaptan from in-house production. Evonik has successfully used this strategy at its DL-methionine facilities in Antwerp, Belgium and Wesseling, Germany.

Methyl mercaptan is a building block for the essential amino acid, DL-methionine. It is used in the preparation of agricultural feeds for livestock; especially pigs and poultry.

Results of the basic engineering and feasibility studies will be available in the coming months; state and local tax incentives for the project has already been approved. The investment is expected to be approximately \$65 million.

Building the plant in Theodore could bring substantial savings in production and freight costs. The ability to integrate the methyl mercaptan plant directly into the



Photo courtesy of Evonik Industries.

Essen Germany-based Evonik industries produces DL-methionine and other products used in animal nutrition at the Theodore, Alabama plant.

present acrolein production could leverage further synergies. "We see the plans for a methyl mercaptan facility as preparation for expand-

ing DL-methionine capacity further in Theodore," says Engel.

A decision on the construction of the plant is expected later this year.

NOAA PORTS system improves port safety and service

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced recently that the Port of Mobile, Alabama, has become the 14th location in the United States to install the Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS)®. PORTS, developed and operated by NOAA, provides accurate real-time oceanographic and meteorological data to mariners that can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through the port, NOAA officials said. The system became operational earlier this winter.

"PORTS gives our shippers, pilots and regulatory agencies important, real-time information on navigational conditions, which allows for the optimization of cargo carriage and improves safety," said James K. Lyons, director and chief executive officer of the Port of Mobile. "We are a proud sponsor of this important technology at the Port of Mobile."

Port of Mobile PORTS data are updated every six minutes and

quality controlled for increased accuracy.

"NOAA is committed to providing real-time environmental data through PORTS and other integrated ocean observing systems to ensure safe, efficient navigation within our nation's ports and beyond," said John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service. "NOAA is pleased to add the Port of Mobile to the nationwide PORTS network."

Administered by the NOAA Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, PORTS measures, integrates and disseminates observations of water levels, currents, salinity, wind and bridge clearance. Knowledge of environmental conditions can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through a waterway by enabling mariners to safely utilize every inch of dredged channel depth, according to NOAA.

While designed to be of service to the marine transportation community, the data are freely accessi-



Photo courtesy of NOAA

NOAA PORTS System locations in Mobile Bay provide real-time navigation and weather conditions from 7 points. Map courtesy of NOAA

ble via the Internet NOAA PORTS information users include port authorities, vessel pilots, shipping companies, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, recreational boaters, fishermen, coastal managers, environmental organizations and academia.

Studies have shown more than

a 50 percent decrease in vessel groundings following the installation of PORTS in other areas, NOAA said. Estimates of economic benefits directly attributed to PORTS range from \$7 million per year for Tampa Bay in Florida to \$16 million per year for Houston-Galveston in Texas.