

COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL : Unpleasant odours

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Sniffing out solutions

Far from a trivial issue, industrial odour management today affects more and more sectors of activity. Noticing this trend, Odotech decided to take this issue head on, offering its global expertise in this field.



Photo : Christian Adnin

"When asked what industrial nuisance causes the most damage, 70% of people surveyed throughout Europe spontaneously speak of olfactory nuisance, even before noise or health risks," states Philippe Micone, European Manager for Odotech. As a direct consequence of urban sprawl, numerous industrial companies, previously isolated at the edge of urban centres, today find themselves in direct confrontation with residents that have settled nearby. Manufacturing, agro-alimentary production, composting or waste disposal are amongst the activities that are essential to communities; nevertheless, for the sake of quality of life, residents have low tolerance of the offensive smells which may arise from such activities.

Complaint management, investigation of sources of smells, over- or under-equipment: the costs of dealing with this problem are sometimes hefty for industrial companies. Even more hefty when investments are not made in appropriate ways.

As a spin-off of the Montreal École Polytechnique, Odotech has carried out activities, since 1998 and throughout the world, in the form of expert assessments and odour impact studies. Far from merely being a promoter of technological solutions, the Canadian company aims firstly at offering diagnostics before seeking the best solution. *"First and foremost we need to work on the existing elements,"* explains Thierry Pagé, CEO of Odotech. *"We begin by detecting the origins of the problem, characterising and quantifying it. It is only afterwards that we can set out a series of useful recommendations in order to obtain prime benefits in terms of odour reduction. Thanks to this proven methodology, it becomes possible to optimise operations with equipment already in place to diminish emissions or define the appropriate investments to make for deodorising equipment."*

To carry out the task of deodorising, measurements are made in terms of odour unit per m³ – a measurement unit introduced by the European norm EN13725. When carried out in laboratories, as was once usually the case, measurements could only be made on an occasional basis.

Now however, thanks to the wireless e-nose network OdoWatch®, it is not only possible to identify the combination of factors generating odours but also to measure these in real time. *"Most of the time, odours are occasional: they are not necessarily detectable at a particular moment. Our approach combines expertise and technology. By identifying what creates problems at a given instant, we succeed in managing issues proactively and offering the right solutions."*

It remains to be said that by characterising and quantifying the problem, Odotech also offers industrial groups an promotional service in the eyes of residents and authorities. *"It is reassuring for everyone to see that the industrialist is taking care of the problem,"* points out Thierry Pagé. *"Factual figures are so much more eloquent! They allow for a better objective comprehension of the degree of the problem, and consequently allow for dialogue, a more constructive means to resolving the problem."*

Three practical cases explained by Philippe Micone

The knacker's yard of Ferso-Bio. In conjunction with local residents – invited to take part in the project on a voluntary basis – the implementation of this solution, in 2006, allowed a significant reduction in offensive smells at the edge of Agen in southwest France. *"We installed OdoWatch® on the bio-filters used at the end of the process. The system has thus allowed the number of complaints made by over 90%..."*

The waste water treatment plant for the city of Montreal. *"Constructed in the middle of the countryside, this plant is today surrounded by residents. Whilst colossal sums were dedicated to its construction, with OdoWatch®, it has been possible to identify the sources of emissions causing problems and to prioritise urgent actions to implement."*

The site of Artois Compost. Following the trail of the Canadian waste water treatment plant, one of the top three European composting sites also got equipped in 2007. The result: all the while increasing its production capacity, it has reduced its nuisance level by 40%.

Par By Laureen Melka

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