



May/June 2006

A Letter from Allen Summers, the Asmark Institute President, to MCPR Members:

It would be impossible to count the number of times we've been called by retailers, searching for a quick fix to get them out of a jam for a regulatory requirement, which has been on the books for over 30 years. In practically all cases a little good faith effort would have prevented the retailer's dilemma. In every case the retailer already knew they should have been addressing the issue but for whatever reasons had not gotten around to it.

Our company was essentially started from a series of calls like this. It would be great to say we set out with a grand plan to create what is recognized today as the Asmark Institute, but it wouldn't be an accurate statement. Our history is simply one of hard work, innovation and responding to our client's needs. We had to be very resourceful and always find a way to get the job done for our clients. It is a style that continues today. We are particularly proud of the relationships that have been developed over the years, with clients, with associations such as MCPR, vendors and regulatory agencies.

These relationships are the key to helping many a retailer out of their jam. There was a time when a prompt and sincere response to a violation was sufficient to help resolve the issue with little or no disruption to the business, but the regulatory climate has changed over the past three years. Some say it is due to the September 11th tragedy; others seem to believe it is connected with tightening budgets at both the state and national levels. Retailers are frequently becoming surprised by new and changing regulations. My entire life has been engaged with agriculture and I have to admit I share their surprise and even concern. We have witnessed a marked increase in the actions of the regulating agencies. Regulators are becoming bolder and even aggressive in pursuing their goals.

For the first time in my career, I believe changes in the regulatory arena have the potential to be disruptive to business. I've been involved with two significant cases this year involving EPA Risk Management Plans and a DOT Safety Permit, which has served as a preview of what is to come. It appears it is going to take a little more than the show of a good faith effort to satisfy them.

It is our belief that state associations such as MCPR will be the first line of defense their members will look to for guidance

and protection. Our industry has an exemplary record in legislative activities, but has suffered when it came to helping members with even the most basic regulatory issues or providing assistance in cases of uneven enforcement. Faced with the challenges presented as our industry consolidates, our state and national associations are continually asked to provide more services with less revenue. It became obvious to us that we were in a unique position that could help make a real difference.

The decision to donate our company to form the Asmark Institute took more than two years. It was a very rewarding process to learn that what had been developed over the past fifteen years garnered the respect and credibility to merit forming the Institute. Susan, Randy and I, along with our staff of ten, will become employees of the institute as it transforms into the only non-profit resource center for retailers in the nation.

The Asmark Institute marks the start of a new era in which associations such as MCPR will be better equipped with resources to service their membership. Armed with these new tools, the MCPR staff will be able to help by answering basic regulatory questions, providing ala carte programs or training kits and even more comprehensive levels of service, which offers options for driver qualification files, training, Risk Management Plans, SARA Tier II reports, Pesticide-Production Reports, etc.

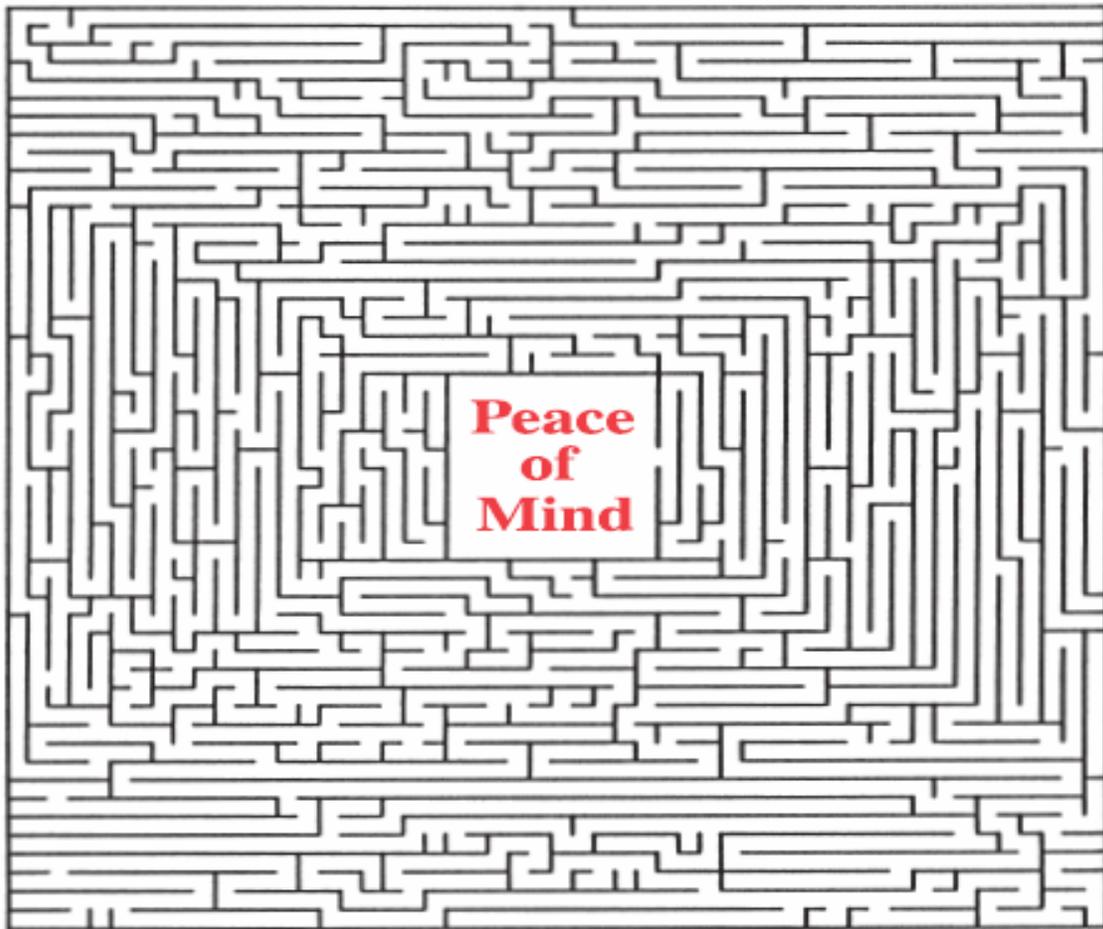
All members of MCPR will benefit from the Institute's national services such as Ask ERICA, the 'electronic repository of interpretations critical to agriculture'. Ask ERICA will archive important interpretations and document their origin for use in the future. A national sign program has been developed to produce quality emergency notification signs for use at the entrance to facilities. A Compliance Assessment Tool is also available through MCPR to provide retailers with a free printed assessment of their compliance effort.

I want to express our appreciation to Bill Bond, Bob Minks and the MCPR Board of Directors for their support of the Asmark Institute. They are among fifteen state crop input associations to sign on as participating state associations. We are excited at the prospect of working with MCPR to service its members.

Sincerely,
Allen Summers
The Asmark Institute



We know exactly what you want!



We can help!

The Minnesota Crop Production Retailers
and the
Asmark Institute

a partnership that will help you through the regulatory maze!

Contact the MCPR Office today!



www.mcpr-cca.org or www.asmark.org

A non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to serving agribusiness.



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