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From the Vice President's Desk

New Year Brings Renewed Emphasis on Health & Safety Campaign

I first want to wish each of you a Happy New Year. We have a lot of challenges ahead of us as we all work hard to make our workplaces safer. If our national health and safety campaign in the oil and petrochemical sectors is to be successful, we will need everyone's help.

Each local union will be receiving in the mail a poster showing scenes from the explosions and fires that rocked and engulfed the Phillips Petroleum Houston Chemical Complex (now Chevron Phillips Chemical Company LLC) on October 23, 1989.

This poster is designed to stir long-time oil and petrochemical workers' memories of that fateful day and to educate younger workers about our campaign to eliminate such explosions, fires and process safety incidents.

We began this campaign years ago when we were the OCAW (Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers union). You all may recall the video we put out, "Out of Control!" after the 1989 explosion. We're just beginning the process of producing a similar video.

When you receive this poster, please use it as a discussion piece about process safety at your union and safety committee meetings, and then post it at your union hall or on a union bulletin board at the plant.

Feb. 10-11 Mobilization

On January 13 we emailed to the local union president and financial officer of each oil local a handbill that counters some of the scare tactics some of our managers use when we demand refinery safety. They want our members to think that safety improvements might lead to shutdowns or job reductions. This couldn't be further from the truth. Explosions, fires and other

process safety problems have led to closures. Making our refineries safe is the only way we can keep them in operation.

Every oil local will be distributing this handbill on Feb. 10-11 using the Communications and Action Team, Rapid Response network or other in-plant mobilization structure. Step up to the plate by contacting your local union officers and offering to hand out this handbill. It's important that every local union in the oil and petrochemical industry participate in this important solidarity action because the industry is watching our campaign very closely.

Shell Closes Montreal Refinery

Chalk up another refinery closure due to the recession. Shell announced Jan. 7 that it plans to turn its Montreal East refinery into a fuel terminal. Low demand for gasoline and other fuels has squeezed the refiner's profits at that location. Shell operated the 130,000 barrels per day refinery for 76 years and said the plant didn't fit into its long-term strategy. A seven-month search for a buyer didn't produce results, so the company decided to shut the facility, probably by year's end. Customer demand will be satisfied by fuel imports.

Other refinery closures have been at Sunoco's Eagle Point refinery in New Jersey and the Valero refinery in Delaware City.

According to *Oil Daily*, "refiners with operations on the East Coast are seen as more vulnerable to closures due to the age and location of the facilities as well as easy access to competing products from European refineries."

Looking at Refined Product Imports

We're concerned about the refined prod-

uct imports that are flowing into this country, especially the East Coast, and their potential to disrupt oil markets, especially in this time of high crude oil prices, a small cost spread between sweet and sour crude oil, and poor refining margins.

According to US Energy Information Administration (EIA) data, US domestic refinery output in the four weeks ending October 16 was 15.8 million barrels per day (bpd). Imports and US production combined equaled 18.5 million bpd. Product imports were 14.1% of this total. It's significant to note that 90.0% of the gasoline and blendstocks imported into the U.S. came in to East Coast ports. Similarly so did 65.4% of the distillate imports and 70.8% of the residual fuel oil imports.

It could be argued that gasoline blendstocks aren't a full equivalent of finished gasoline. However, most imported blendstocks are sent to and blended directly at distribution terminals and aren't subject to further processing at US refineries. A portion of US products imports consists of unfinished oils, which normally require further processing at a refinery. Nevertheless, the initial processing of these imported products is work that could be performed in the U.S.

Trade publication *Oil Daily* ran an article in its Jan. 5 edition that said sluggish US oil demand resulted in a drop in US imports of crude oil and refined products for last October. Product imports amounted to 2.327 million bpd in October 2009, down 950,000 bpd from October 2008 according to EIA data. Imports of products were basically lower across the spectrum compared with October 2008, with motor gasoline blend stocks falling 270,000 bpd.

The article said refined product imports from non-OPEC suppliers dropped below
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USW Holds First Of Several Community Forums In Campaign to Ban Hydrogen Fluoride Use In Refineries

The USW held its first educational community forum Nov. 11 in Corpus Christi on the dangers of hydrogen fluoride (HF) and alternatives to its use. Future forums will be held in Texas City, Philadelphia and other locations to be determined.

“We hope these forums will create the public pressure necessary to persuade refiners to use a safer alternative,” said Jim Lefton, sub-director of USW District 13.

Over 30 residents from the fence line communities surrounding the Citgo, Valero and Flint Hills refineries listened to presentations by HF experts and members of the Sierra Club and local group, Citizens for Environmental Justice (CEJ).

The next day the USW held a press conference announcing the stepped up campaign, which originated from concern over a series of HF releases this past year. Lefton said the fire in the alkylation unit at Citgo’s Corpus Christi East refinery last July prompted the USW to take action. A USW member was severely injured in the fire, which released HF.

HF Travels for Miles

When released, hydrofluoric acid clumps together as a dense cloud and can travel miles downwind, said Dr. Fred Millar, a consultant on chemical accident prevention.

“According to the refineries own data, as of September 2009, a large HF release in Corpus Christi could cover approximately 17 miles and pose disastrous health effects for thousands of people,” Lefton said.

The chemical is used as a catalyst in the alkylation process to make high-octane gasoline and is a corrosive poison. Inhalation of it can damage the nose, throat, lungs, heart, liver and kidneys. HF readily penetrates the skin and destroys soft tissues and decalcifies bone. Exposure to high concentrations of it can cause death.

Lefton said Corpus Christi has the second highest concentration of HF used in the country. All three refineries in the city use the chemical in large quantities.

The Citgo East plant borders the Hillcrest neighborhood, a community of people of color. On July 19 when the fire broke out, a company public relations representative said there was no release and nothing to worry about, said Suzie Canalez, executive director of Citizens for Environmental Justice. The next day the neighborhood heard there was a HF release, she said.

“They’ve left us in the dark over and over again,” she said.

When Canalez went to the EPA to see the refiners’ maps showing the impact of an HF release on Corpus Christi, she was told by the government she could not view them because terrorists could obtain them.

“If the public knew the danger of HF and that it could wipe out the entire city, they would demand safer alternatives,”

Canalez said.

Safer Alternatives Exist

The USW, CEJ and Sierra Club all support safer alternatives. Sulfuric acid is used in the alkylation process at 50 U.S. refineries, but requires regeneration and also is hazardous. Fifty refineries use HF and the remaining 50 refineries in the U.S. don’t use the alkylation process. Some refineries have adopted modified HF.

One promising alternative is solid-acid catalysts. “We think that should be the alternative of choice,” Millar said. “Pilot testing has shown it works fine and produces alkylate that is just as good as HF alkylate.”

Dr. James Nelhsen, process development manager at Exelus, Inc., discussed his company’s solid-acid catalyst ExSact at the community forum. Solid-acid catalysts provide safer and cleaner alkylation and there are products available that solve the problem of the acid’s short lifetime.

No U.S. refinery has opted to try a solid-acid catalyst. Millar said that is because corporate culture favors HF.

Lefton said it would cost a refinery

about \$4 million to put in a test unit using ExSact—a cost, he said, that is like “\$5 to someone like you or me.” He said putting in the equipment to use a solid-acid catalyst is about 50 percent of the cost of installing an HF plant.

“The industry is just stuck in the mud with the process they have; they don’t want change and they’re not sympathetic to the fence line communities,” Lefton said.

The USW has enlisted the BlueGreen Alliance, a coalition of unions and environmental groups led by the USW and Sierra Club, to lobby the EPA and Congress for strong rules against the use of HF in refineries and for a safer alternative.

Millar said the current chemical safety bill passed by the House has given the government some authority to require inherently safer technology.

What You Can Do

Ask your representative and senators to support a strong chemical facility security bill. Contact EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and ask her to have EPA exercise its authority under the Clean Air Act (Section 112 r) to require refineries using HF in the alkylation process to implement safer technologies: Administrator Lisa Jackson, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ariel Rios Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Mail code 1101A, Washington, D.C. 20460. Email: Jackson.lisa@epa.gov

Also, talk with your local union safety committee about HF concerns in your workplace.

Chemical Safety Board's Urgent Recommendations to Citgo Lack Substance

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) on Dec. 9 issued urgent recommendations to Citgo regarding the water mitigation system for the hydrogen fluoride (HF) unit at the company's Corpus Christi, Texas, refinery without addressing use of the problem chemical itself.

The board also called on the company to do third-party audits of its HF units at the Corpus Christi, Texas, and Lemont, Ill., refineries.

If CSB board members decide an imminent danger is present and there is potential for serious harm unless action is taken, they issue urgent recommendations before the final investigation report is completed on an incident.

The board's urgent recommendations came as a result of its investigation of the July 19, 2009 explosion and fire at Citgo's East refinery in Corpus Christi.

Hydrocarbons and HF were released from the refinery's HF alkylation unit. The hydrocarbons ignited and a fire erupted that lasted for several days. USW Local 13-1647 member Gabriel Alvarado was critically injured by the fire and another worker was treated for possible HF exposure.

A process safety failure led to the incident. CSB investigators determined that a

blockage of liquid caused by the sudden failure of a control valve led to violent shaking within the process recycle piping. The shaking broke threaded pipe connections resulting in the release of hydrocarbons. The cloud of hydrocarbons reached an adjacent unit and ignited. The ensuing fire caused multiple additional fires and the release of about 42,000 pounds of HF from equipment and piping within the unit.

HF Release Estimated

Taking into account scientific studies that show water mitigation systems can remove up to 95 percent of airborne HF, the CSB said the efficiency of the system Citgo used in Corpus Christi was likely 90 percent or less. Based on this 90 percent efficiency, the CSB estimated 4,000 pounds of HF had been released.

HF is a corrosive, highly toxic chemical which can severely burn skin, eyes and other tissue and can cause death. It is used as a catalyst in the alkylation unit to produce high-octane gasoline.

Citgo did not have enough water for the water spray system used to absorb HF. The CSB's urgent recommendation requested Citgo to develop and initiate plans within 30 days to ensure an adequate

How to get *The Oil Worker*

If you are an oil worker and are not receiving *The Oil Worker* newsletter and would like to get it, please send your home e-mail address to International Vice President Gary Beever's administrative assistant, Julie Lidstone, at jlidstone@usw.org. Besides your home e-mail address, please state the name of the company you work for and your job title.

The Oil Worker comes out at least once per month and features information about oil bargaining, the oil industry, health and safety, oil unions from around the world and health care.

water supply to the refinery's HF mitigation system. Every 30 days the company is
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Valero Permanently Shuts Delaware City Refinery

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2 million bpd in October 2009, for the first time since December 2003, as US refineries closed the gap in supplying the domestic market.

US refiners are exporting more refined products. EIA data show that the US sold 2.15 million bpd of refined products to other countries in October 2009.

Top Importers

Our Strategic Campaigns department did an analysis of petroleum product imports into the US and especially the East Coast. EIA data for July 2009 was reviewed for the 20 largest US importers.

The top five importers into the U.S. in July 2009 were Valero/Ultramar (406,000 bpd), ExxonMobil (188,000 bpd), Chevron (175,000 bpd), Shell/Motive (151,000 bpd) and Irving Oil Corp. (143,000 bpd). BP imported 141,000 bpd in July 2009. Of these six companies all

but Irving have major refining assets in the U.S. These five are five of the largest refiners in the U.S. All of the six but Valero and Irving are global oil multinationals, and Valero is the largest U.S. refiner.

Global oil majors and significant US refiners accounted for 63% of US products imports by the top 20 in July 2009.

The biggest importers into the East Coast region for July 2009 were Irving Oil Corp. (143,000 bpd), ConocoPhillips (104,000 bpd), BP (102,000 bpd), ExxonMobil (94,000 bpd) and Morgan Stanley Capital Group (90,000 bpd). Irving is a Canadian refiner with a network of service stations in eastern Canada and the U.S. northeast. Morgan Stanley Capital Group is a unit of investment bank Morgan Stanley.

We will continue to monitor petroleum product imports and investigate this situation closely. You'll see further discussion

of this issue in future editions of *The Oil Worker*.

Hope for the Future

Oil Daily reported a study done by Hart Energy Consulting that says the global refining sector should see a recovery over the next decade, driven by the low-sulfur diesel and gasoline markets.

The firm said that strong global GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth in 2010 and beyond means global demand for refined petroleum products will increase 1.7% per year during the next decade. The Asia-Pacific region will account for about half of this increase.

Environmental regulations will create a demand for low-sulfur products and refiners that can provide these low-sulfur fuels will be the ones that will be most profitable in the short term.

Gary Beevers

**International Vice President
Chair, National Oil Bargaining Program**

Illinois Attorney General Sues ExxonMobil

The Illinois attorney general has filed a lawsuit against ExxonMobil, alleging it violated the state's environmental protection act by creating pollution through the release of hydrogen fluoride.

At the company's Joliet, Ill., refinery, there was a leak of HF and liquefied petroleum gas on Aug. 6 that injured two employees.

According to the court document, the problem began with a pump failure April 16. Two days later the company discovered that HF and LPG were leaking from the end of the pipe where it was connected to the pump. A bleeder blind was installed to seal off the end of the pipe to prevent leakage of HF and LPG.

On Aug. 6 an employee was working to prepare for the removal of the hose connected to the bleeder blind when the release occurred. At least one other worker was nearby. A release of about 47 pounds of HF and 3,850 pounds of LPG occurred from a quarter-inch pipe nipple attached to the bleeder blind installed on the discharge pipe to the pump. A water mitigation system was activated to control the HF gas and the alkylation unit was shut down. The next day the pump was reinstalled following repairs.

The state attorney general asked the court to order ExxonMobil to prevent the release of air contaminants from any source, including HF and propane, to pro-

hibit the use of the bleeder blind assembly until the root cause for the failure was found, and to prohibit all bleeder blind assemblies of a similar design and configuration until further order of the court.

The court was also asked to assess against ExxonMobil a civil penalty of \$50,000 for each and every violation of the state's environmental protection act, with an additional penalty of \$10,000 for each day of violation.

"We wish the Illinois attorney general had taken the position that ExxonMobil no longer has the ability to control hazardous chemicals and should use safer alternatives," said USW International Vice President Gary Beevers.

USW Urges Illinois Attorney General to Compel ExxonMobil to Use Hydrogen Fluoride Alternative

Vice President Gary Beevers sent a letter Dec. 31, 2009 to Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan requesting that she use her authority to compel ExxonMobil to use a safer alternative to hydrogen fluoride (HF) at its Joliet, Ill., refinery.

The attorney general filed a lawsuit last fall against ExxonMobil, alleging it violated the state's environmental protection act by creating pollution through the release of hydrogen fluoride and propane in a leak Aug. 6, 2009 at the Joliet refinery. The leak caused a fire and two workers were injured, one critically, from thermal burns.

"There are safe alternatives to HF for this application (alkylation process) and

we request your assistance to move this green alternative into commercial use in the United States by compelling ExxonMobil to initiate a pilot-scale project utilizing a solid-acid catalyst in place of HF," Beevers wrote. "This could be accomplished through a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) as part of the company's settlement agreement with your office for a reasonable cost (under \$5 million)."

Beevers also requested that a third party monitor the SEP so that the process is correctly and efficiently operated.

At present, the USW is aware of at least two solid-acid catalysts licensed for com-

mercial use: AlkyClean (developed by ABB Lummus, Albermarle and Neste Oil) and ExSact (developed by Exelus). AlkyClean was used in a two-year demonstration project in Porvoo, Finland. Exelus has been running a small scale operation in recent months and is ready to set up their process on a commercial scale.

Unlike the solid-acid catalysts, HF is a hazardous chemical and is lethal even in small amounts. In January 2007, despite receiving medical treatment, a 37-year-old USW member died within six-and-a-half hours after a small amount of hydrofluoric acid discharged onto his face during a maintenance procedure. Cardiac arrest has occurred after HF skin exposure affecting 2.5% of the body.

Inhalation of HF also is a serious hazard and can cause severe nose and throat irritation, damage to the lungs, liver and kidneys and death. When released to the environment, HF can form a heavy, aerosol vapor cloud that can travel for miles at lethal concentrations, putting potentially thousands at risk.

Besides representing the refinery workers at Citgo's facility in Lemont, Ill., the USW represents workers at 25 of the nation's other 51 refineries using HF in the alkylation process. Getting a major refiner like ExxonMobil to do an HF pilot project could encourage other refiners to follow.

Distribute *The Oil Worker* to All Members!

The Oil Worker is your newsletter. We need every member in your facility to get a copy. So when you receive *The Oil Worker*, make copies for your members and use your Communications and Action Team, steward network or

Rapid Response network to distribute them. If you email it to your members, please email it only to their home email address. This newsletter must not go through the company email system.

Chemical Safety Board's Urgent Recommendations to Citgo Lack Substance

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to report actions planned or completed to the Refinery Terminal Fire Company and Local Emergency Planning Committee until all planned actions are fully implemented.

The CSB's second urgent recommendation called on Citgo to complete a third-party audit within 60 days of its HF alkylation units at its Corpus Christi and Lemont refineries as recommended by the American Petroleum Institute. The company is to share the audit results and actions planned or completed to correct deficiencies in each refinery with the staff and contractors who work in the alkylation unit.

No Review of Alternatives

Instead of focusing on the use of HF, the CSB took a band-aid approach. The board could have recommended the study of safer alternatives, such as solid-acid catalysts, the USW said in a statement to the press. A recommendation could have been made to have a test slip stream done to compare the HF process to the solid-acid catalyst. A slip stream allows for an alternative catalyst to be run simultaneously as the HF system and is affordable. The inherently safer technology is here; it just has to be used.

Critics charge that the CSB made

assumptions about the effectiveness of the water mitigation system and took the company's word that only a small percent of the deadly HF got past the water spray.

"Water spray is one of the least effective methods of addressing a toxic release," said Jim Lefton, sub-district 1 director for District 13. "For example, highly flammable material was also released and ignited at Citgo along with the HF acid release. The flammables could have exploded. In an explosion, the water spray equipment could have been seriously damaged and failed to operate.

"The entire 21 tons of HF acid could have formed a potentially deadly cloud. Despite this and other significant limitations of water spray systems, CSB issued an urgent recommendation calling for better water spray and an audit of the alkylation unit. These recommendations will do little if anything to prevent future serious HF acid releases," Lefton said.

Expand Audits

The board's recommendation that third-party audits should be done at Citgo's two US refineries should be expanded to all refineries that use the HF catalyst, said the USW in its press statement. These audits are to be done in accordance with the American Petroleum Institute's (API) Recommended Practice 751, which says

audits should be done internally or by a third party every three years for alkylation units that use hydrogen fluoride. These audits include a checklist of items such as maintenance inspections, log books and training.

The problem with the API's standards is that they are recommendations only and therefore can be ignored by the oil companies. Before the CSB issued its recommendations, the Citgo East plant had never conducted a voluntary safety audit of its alkylation unit.

The CSB should have recommended that Citgo share the audit results and planned action with everyone in the refinery and not just the employees in the alkylation unit, the USW said in its press statement. Sharing information alone is insufficient. The Process Safety Management Standard says management is to consult with workers, i.e. obtain their input.

Union Ignored

While the CSB had discussions with the company regarding the recommendations, it apparently had no dialogue with the union. The CSB never discussed the validity of the recommendations with the USW or whether workers had suggestions they would like to see enacted.

"We do not feel the CSB is meeting its charter by not discussing the proposed recommendations with the union as well as the company," the USW said in its statement. "We hope the final report addresses the overall safety of the refinery, similar to the BP Texas City report where the board told BP to examine the safety management systems in all its US refineries."

Citgo issued a statement to the media Dec. 9 saying that it has compiled with the CSB recommendations.

What's Happening at your Site?

Send us articles about the issues and activities your local is engaged in. Such pieces should be short and to the point. We especially like quotes from the membership. We'll accept articles that are up to 500 words in length. Keep in mind that we reserve the right to edit contributions for length and clarity. Be sure to put your name, local union number and phone number where you can be contacted during the day or

evening in case we have questions.

If there are any issues you would like to see covered or questions about bargaining that you have, we'd like to hear about them as well. We'll get to those issues as soon as we can.

You can send your articles and contact the editor, Lynne Baker, at lbaker@usw.org; phone: (o) 615-831-6782; (cell) 615-828-6169.



Phillips 1989 Explosion Exemplifies Importance of Health & Safety Campaign

The explosions and fires that rocked the Phillips Petroleum Houston Chemical Complex in Pasadena, Texas, on Oct. 23, 1989 killed 23 workers and injured 314 more.

Memories of the incident have not been forgotten for many long-time oil and petrochemical workers, and the event still serves as a reminder of the fires and explosions that still continue to plague our industry.

"It's 20 years later and we're still seeing the same types of things happening—fires, explosions and members being killed," said Kim Nibarger, of the USW Health, Safety and Environment department. "Something has got to change."

A poster showing the explosion, fires and wreckage from the 1989 incident along with the words "It's Only A Matter of Time" is being sent to each local to post at the union hall or union bulletin board. In honor of the workers killed in the Phillips explosion and those who continue to die in explosions, fires and other workplace incidents, we are expanding our emphasis on health and safety in the oil and petrochemical industries.

What Happened in 1989

At the time of the blast, the Phillips Chemical Complex produced 1.5 billion pounds per year of high-density polyethylene, a plastic material used in milk bottles and other containers.

Local 13-227 Secretary-Treasurer Jimmy Easter, also a health and safety representative, recalls management pushing production over safety. He said the work that led to the incident had been repeatedly refused by union maintenance workers "who knew the equipment was not in a safe state."

Contract workers had closed a key 8-inch valve to isolate the polyethylene reactor from a product-collecting "leg" (a piece of equipment) that was being disassembled to clear a plug of polyethylene particles.

"Phillips employees refused to work on the 'leg' because it was leaking hydrocarbons, so they (management) gave it to contractors who couldn't say no," said Roby Plemons, a Local 13-227 health and safety representative.

Air hoses that controlled the opening

and closing of the valve were disconnected, but when the valve was returned to service, the air hoses were reconnected in reverse position. Almost instantly, 90,000 pounds of gaseous ethylene-isobutene pushed through the now open valve at nearly 900 pounds per square inch pressure and sought an ignition source.

An alarm sounded at 1:05 p.m. and the 300-some workers on the site had maybe 90 seconds to react before the ignition. Those who escaped north swam the Houston Ship Channel to get away. The U.S. Coast Guard and City of Houston fire boats evacuated to safety more than 100 people trapped across the Houston Ship Channel. Others scrambled over walls and fences to escape the huge fireball.

But there were employees, including the plant's fire brigade, who raced to the

affected process unit, hoping to avert a disaster in the making.

The blasts could be heard and felt 25 miles away. The largest explosion measured 3.5 to 4.0 on the Richter scale, according to seismologists at Rice University. The force of the blasts threw metal and concrete debris a mile skyward and six miles from the scene. A maze of piping and 14-story process towers were reduced to twisted wreckage.

Fourteen members of the Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers (OCAW) union perished in the disaster along with two non-union hourly workers, four workers employed by contract firms and three supervisory personnel, according to the *OCAW Reporter's Lifelines Health and Safety News*.

In testimony before a congressional subcommittee, Bob Wages, then vice president of the OCAW, said the three primary factors causing the uncontrolled release of gas were inadequate lockout; an unskilled, untrained subcontractor maintenance crew; and an inherently flawed reactor design.

Remembering October 23

Plemons was working about 100 yards from the blast that day, and remembers wondering whether or not he would live.

Easter was working as a contractor at the plant in 1989. He recalls lying awake at night wishing he could help search for those who were lost.

What he remembers most is the "loss of life and carnage that took place in a matter of seconds and the continued danger in the facility for days; the nights and days that families stayed awake, waiting for word that perhaps by some miracle their loved one was still alive and as time passed and hope faded, the dread of hearing the body of their loved one was found; the seemingly endless funerals; the necessity of closed casket funerals; the anger that the plant's employees began dealing with and how long that anger continued as production over safety became an issue they did not feel was dealt with in spite of such high losses of life and property."

Plemons said his family was scared for him to return to work at the plant. He said some employees could not return to work because they were afraid of being killed.

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In Loving Memory

Ruben Alamillo

James Hubbard

James Allen

Richard Leos

Albert Arce

William Scott Martin

James Campbell, Jr.

Juan Medrano

Juan Garcia

James Nichols

Eloy Gonzales

Jesse Northrup

Jose Gonzalez

Mary Kay O'Connor

Mark Greeson

Gerald Pipher

Jeffrey Harrison

Cipriano Rodriguez, Jr.

Delbert Haskell

Jesse Trevino

Scotty Hawkins

Lino Trujillo

Nathan Warner

Phillips 1989 Explosion Exemplifies Importance of Health & Safety Campaign

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Others, he said, are still angry today.

The Aftermath

The 1989 incident led to passage in 1992 of the OSHA Process Safety Management standard that seeks to eliminate or mitigate the consequences of such releases by emphasizing the use of management controls to address the risks of handling or working near hazardous chemicals.

“Some things changed by regulation, but we still had to fight for safety,” Plemons said. “Production was still in the way of safety; it was always a struggle for the company even after so many died.”

Easter said that after the 1989 incident the company staffed the safety and training departments, hired a “very strong” maintenance force and began process safety training, including lockout-tagout for maintenance work. A consultant (Safety Resource Inc.) came in, took the safety process to a higher level and involved all employees.

Easter said the union had strong involvement in health and safety matters in the beginning, but plant management changed and the union was shut out of the process.

“Many things changed without our input, and then there were the other two explosions and fires in June of 1999 and February of 2000 that put us all on a road of further shock and damaging relationships over continued neglect of safety in the facility,” he said.

In the 2000 explosion Plemons was burned over 43 percent of his body.

“You never forget it could happen today,” he said. “My family suffered greatly.”

New Attitude Toward Safety

The facility is now operated by the Chevron Phillips Chemical Company LLC, a joint venture of ChevronTexaco Corp. and ConocoPhillips.

Over the last 15 months or so, a new plant manager has invited, encouraged and insisted on the union’s involvement in safety and other matters, Easter said. He

said the plant manager holds daily safety meetings that include staff, supervisors, union representatives, contractors and anyone in the work force who gets released to attend. All safety incidents, including near misses, are discussed as to how they happened, how they were handled and what the recommendations are to prevent repeat incidents. Everyone is free to participate and add to the discussions.

“One does not get the impression that the involvement comes because it is the law but that it is the right thing to do,” Easter said.

He said that in the past incident investigations were used as a tool for discipline. “While we are still struggling with how we see discipline, I see there being a shift of management having accountability and the desire to fix the problem, not just discipline who management feels is the problem,” he said.

Pasadena Plastics Complex Plant Manager Scott Sharp called the facility among the safest in the world. He cited technology and process safety improvements made over the past 20 years, and an improved work culture that aims for zero injuries.

“It’s like day and night since the new manager has come,” Plemons said. “It’s safety first above everything, no matter how small the job/task is. We are now putting more effort and focus on keeping people safe and production is way down the list.”

USW member Rose Perry wrote a poem for the Oct. 23, 2009 memorial service to speak especially to the families of those who died in the 1989 explosion.

In Loving Memory For The Gone But Never Forgotten

We acknowledge and welcome you today, family of our never forgotten friends.

The Lord placed some wonderful people in our world and every one of us, who were blessed to be touched by them, holds a special love in remembrance For each of them.

Today we take honor and pride in having shared a time with your loved ones, our never forgotten friends.

Their warmth and goodness still lingers on the hearts of those who are able to look back, and reflect the time they spent with us.

They are our never forgotten friends, who meant so much to us.

The life of a loved one lights up the heart, and that light continues to glow and shall never depart, the glow of each special memory will continue to indwell upon our hearts.

Time has not erased the image of the spirit of their soul.

The aroma of the spirits, of our unforgotten friends, will always be set apart to never be forgotten, to be remembered as gone, but never forgotten. We are thankful for the time they shared with us, to be remembered and never forgotten.

We give praises to all of you, for allowing us to comfort you. We hope this day will be a blessing to each of you.

With express gratitude for you, the family of our never forgotten friends.

To share in this occasion, in honoring the memories of each one that is so dear. In remembrance of their footprints, we no longer see, appreciation for the spirit of their souls is

a special tribute for their contribution we embrace a cornerstone among the trees for our never forgotten friends.

As we look upon the trees we visit the special spirits, and remembrance of each of thee,

Our never forgotten friends.
God’s blessing shine upon thee,

In loving memory for
Our never forgotten friends.

Vice President Beevers Discusses Collaboration with Unite

USW Vice President Gary Beevers met Nov. 12 with Unite leaders in the oil sector to discuss possibilities for collaboration. The USW joined together with Unite at the union's 2008 July convention to form Workers Uniting and do joint actions in areas like organizing, contract negotiations, and health and safety.

Beevers and Unite leaders Phil McNulty, national officer of the oil and chemical sector, Ian Waddell, national officer for off-shore oil, Mark Lyons, executive member of the oil and chemical sector, and Ron Wood, a Shell refinery shop steward, exchanged information about each union's representation in oil, experience with common employers, bargaining, current initiatives and possibilities for collaboration. They also discussed the impact of the economic downturn on the oil sector in each of their countries.

While the USW represents oil workers at refineries, pipelines and distribution terminals, Unite represents oil workers in distribution, oil transport, off-shore construction, drilling and refineries.

Both unions represent workers at BP, ExxonMobil, Shell, ConocoPhillips, Ineos, Sun Company, Total Fina Elf, Marathon Oil and Fuchs Lubricants.

Unite's oil bargaining is more decentralized than it is for the USW. At Unite, communication between representatives at the workplace level ensures that the oil contract at each facility is similar.

Both unions will experience a major changeover in the oil sector during the next five years as the older work force retires. Oil employer attempts to undermine workers' pensions is a problem for both Unite and the USW. Both unions agreed to work together on this

problem.

Another area they agreed to work together on was health and safety. Unite leaders said there have been many injuries in their oil sector. They agreed to share information on health and safety legislation in the U.K. that addresses fatigue and other issues.

Further collaboration between the two unions will include visits at each others' oil worker gatherings. Unite leaders invited Beevers to attend their oil sector meetings later in 2009. Beevers extended the same welcome for the USW's oil conference in September 2010. It was suggested that a one-day Workers Uniting oil industry meeting be held immediately after the USW conference to further develop joint projects and strategy.

Check out www.workersuniting.org to learn more about our joint collaboration with Unite.

News Briefs from Around the Industry

Deep Analysis Missing from CSB Investigation—The U.S. Chemical Safety Board investigated the Dec. 19, 2007 explosion at chemical manufacturer T2 Laboratories and determined an exothermic chemical reaction was the likely cause. A 2,400-gallon batch reactor containing the octane-enhancing gasoline additive methylcyclopentadienyl manganese tricarbonyl (MCMT) suffered a loss of cooling, which led to uncontrollable rises in temperature and pressure. The reactor burst, igniting its contents and creating an explosion equivalent to 1,400 lb. of TNT.

CSB's recommendation that reactive chemical education be provided in undergraduate chemical engineering curricula was not tough enough, according to the USW and other chemical workers' unions. The group said CSB is "abrogating its mandate" to investigate accidents and urged the agency to repeat past recommendations that the government toughen

reactive chemical regulations.

Since 2002, CSB has urged without success that EPA and OSHA expand their regulations to include reactive chemicals and mixtures.

A previous CSB study found that over a 20-year period, U.S. chemical companies had 167 serious reactive accidents, killing 108 workers and injuring hundreds more.

"It will be years before an educational recommendation has any impact," said Mike Wright, USW director of health, safety and the environment, to *Chemical & Engineering News*. "The recommendation gives people working in and living around the plants little comfort. The board needs a deeper analysis, and they didn't provide it."

Public Gains Early Access to Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) Data—Beginning in August, the EPA started giving the public unprecedented early access to the 2008 TRI data files that give critical information

about local toxic releases. The EPA plans to have the 2008 TRI National Analysis done in December.

No More White House Influence in Assessing Toxic Chemicals—EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson overturned a Bush-era policy that formalized White House interference in toxic chemical assessment and replaced it with a new process that increases public transparency and reduces political interference. The new process will be under the Office of Research and Development Integrated Risk Information System program, which has an additional \$5 million and 10 new employees.

More Companies Required to Report Hazardous Releases—EPA reversed a Bush-era 2006 rule that reduced the number of industrial facilities required to provide detailed reports of their emissions under the Toxic Release Inventory. President Obama overturned the rule in an omnibus bill he signed.

Process Safety Incidents—Oct. 1 thru Oct. 19, 2009

All information is taken from the Department of Energy website. For the complete list of up-to-date refinery events go to www.oilbargaining.org

Total to Restart Unit at 174,000 b/d Port Arthur, Texas Refinery October 1-5

Total planned to restart "Unit 837" at its 174,000 b/d Port Arthur, Texas refinery from October 1-5, the company said in a filing with state regulators. The filing did not say when the unit went offline. <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091001-706819.html>
<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=129963>

Posted to DOE website 10-1-09.

EPA Requests \$7 Million Fine over Claims that Frontier Oil Illegally Dumped Hazardous Materials into Pond near 52,000 b/d Frontier Oil Refinery in Cheyenne, Wyoming

<http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=11243290#> Listed on DOE website 10-2-09

OSHA Cites Alon for 27, Potentially Dangerous Violations at 70,000 b/d Big Spring, Texas Refinery

Bloomberg News, 12:24 October 2, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-2-09

Shell Restarts Hydrocracker after Pump Failure at 329,800 b/d Deer Park, Texas Refinery October 2

A charge pump failure forced offline a hydrocracker unit at Shell's 329,800 b/d Deer Park, Texas refinery on October 2, the company said in a filing with state regulators. The pump shutdown triggered flaring from the hydrocracker and a gasoline-making catalytic cracking unit (CCU), Shell said in the filing. The company did not say whether the disruption forced shut the CCU. The incident occurred "during a heavy rainstorm and extreme lightning," according to the filing. Shell said it curtailed a reformer and hydrogen plant, but restarted the downed hydrocracker to minimize flaring. The company was investigating the incident, as of the filing.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130251>

Reuters, 20:02 October 2, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-5-09

FCC Offline at Exxon Mobil's 150,000

b/d Torrance, California Refinery by October 4

A 100,200 b/d gasoline-making fluidic catalytic cracking unit (FCC) shut at Exxon Mobil's 155,000 b/d Torrance, California refinery by October 4, said a source familiar with the facility's operations. Exxon Mobil did not confirm the shutdown, but did report to state regulators an unspecified breakdown and flaring. A second, undisclosed unit shut due to the incident, according to the source familiar with operations. Bloomberg News, 01:29 October 5, 2009
Reuters, 12:22 October 5, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-5-09

Snag Forces Shut 120,000 b/d FCC at Exxon Mobil's 503,000 b/d Baton Rouge, Louisiana Refinery October 2

A snag forced shut a 120,000 b/d gasoline-producing fluid catalytic cracker unit (FCC) at Exxon Mobil's 503,000 b/d Baton Rouge, Louisiana refinery on October 2, trade sources said. The sources expected the unit to remain offline for about one week.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSN0538437720091005> Listed on DOE website 10-5-09

Update: Citgo Postpones Restart of Explosion-Downed Alkylation Unit at Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery

Citgo postponed the restart of an explosion-downed alkylation unit amid safety concerns, a news source said. An explosion forced shut the unit on July 19. The company had expected to begin restarting the unit on October 18 or 19, but the United Steel Workers Union (USW) protested the plans. "The local union and the international union are very concerned about the safety of the workers and are concerned for the citizens of Corpus Christi outside the gates, the USW said in a letter to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). "If this accelerated pace and disregard of regulations continues, we fear another worst-case scenario," it said.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091006-705719.html> Listed on DOE website 10-6-09

Fire Forces Shut Hydrocracker at Valero's 315,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery by October 7

A small fire forced shut a hydrocracker at the west plant of Valero's 315,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas refinery on October

6-7, a spokesman said. The company expected to repair the affected unit and "restore normal operations as quickly as possible," it said in a filing with state regulators. The spokesman did not say when the unit might return to service.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssEnergyNews/idUSN0714670820091007>
<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSSP47420120091007>
<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130413>

Listed on DOE website 10-7-09

FCC-Related Emissions at Citgo's 156,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery by October 7

Bloomberg News, 12:10 October 7, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-7-09

Update: Valero Shuts SMR Unit after Small Fire at 315,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery October 7

Valero shut a steam methane reforming unit (SMR) for maintenance after yesterday's small fire at the 315,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas refinery, according to a filing with state regulators and an earlier company statement. The fire also forced shut a hydrocracking unit, previous sources said. Valero expected the SMR unit to remain offline until October 10, it said in the regulatory filing.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130427>

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130426>

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130413>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091008-707852.html>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSN0747825320091007>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssEnergyNews/idUSN0714670820091007>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSSP47420120091007>

Listed on DOE website 10-8-09

Pump Malfunction Triggers Flaring at Valero's 182,000 b/d Delaware City, Delaware Refinery by October 8—No Impact to Production, Company Says

Cooling water pumps malfunctioned at Valero's 182,000 b/d Delaware City, Delaware refinery by October 8, but a

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spokesman said the incident did not impact production. The event triggered flaring, he said. Separately at Delaware City, a Valero official said the company had shut the gasification and coker units due to economic conditions.

Bloomberg News, 13:13 October 8, 2009
DJN, 09:45 October 8, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-8-09

Total Slows Cogen Turbine at 174,000 b/d Port Arthur, Texas Refinery October 8

Total expected to reduce a cogen turbine to its “lowest firing rate in order to fix a leaking exchanger,” it said in a filing with state regulators. The company did not say when the unit would resume normal service.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130459>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091008-707852.html> Listed on DOE website 10-8-09

Regenerator Temperature Drop Forces Brief FCC Shutdowns at Citgo’s 156,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery October 7

Citgo briefly shut two gasoline-producing fluid catalytic cracking units (FCC) after a drop in regenerator temperature at its Corpus Christi, Texas refinery, the company said in a filing with state regulators. The incident lasted just 18 minutes, according to the filing.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130432>

Reuters, 00:34 October 8, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-8-09.

Illinois Attorney General Files Suit over August 6 Propane, Hydrofluoric Acid Discharge at ExxonMobil’s 238,600 b/d Joliet, Illinois Refinery—Incident Injured One Employee

DJN, 10:54 October 8, 2009. Listed on DOE website 10-8-09

ExxonMobil Restarts Hydrocracker at 567,000 b/d Baytown, Texas Refinery over Weekend

ExxonMobil restarted a hydrocracker over the weekend at its 567,000 b/d Baytown, Texas refinery, a news source said, after a compressor malfunction forced the unit offline on October 9. Operators had curtailed associated units “to minimize emissions,” the company said in its initial filing with state regulators. The incident did not

significantly impact production, according to the filing.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130563>

<http://in.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idINN1247896020091012> Posted to DOE website 10-13-09.

BP Reports FCC Exchanger Leak at 467,720 b/d Texas City, Texas Refinery October 10

BP “isolated and depressurized” a leaking heat exchanger, associated with a fluid catalytic cracking unit (FCC), at its 467,720 b/d Texas City, Texas refinery by October 10, it said in a filing with state regulators. The filing did not say if the incident had any impact on the related FCC.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130569>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091012-704657.html> Posted to DOE website 10-13-09.

SRU Snag at Flint Hills’ 288,468 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery October 11

A sulfur recovery unit (SRU) malfunction triggered flaring at Flint Hills Resources’ 288,468 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas refinery on October 11, the company said in a filing with state regulators. Operators restarted a separate SRU, down for planned maintenance, “to help lower the amount of H₂S in the fuel gas system,” according to the filing. The filing did not say if the incident had any impact to production.

<http://www11.tceq.state.tx.us/oce/eer/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.getDetails&target=130623>

<http://in.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idINN1214935920091012> Posted to DOE website 10-13-09.

OSHA Cites ConocoPhillips for \$92,000 of Safety-and-Health-Related Problems at 238,000 b/d Bayway Refinery in Linden, New Jersey

Bloomberg News, 15:26 October 9, 2009. Posted to DOE website 10-13-09.

Breakdown Triggers Flaring at Tesoro’s 100,000 b/d Wilmington, California Refinery October 14

A breakdown caused flaring at Tesoro’s 100,000 b/d Wilmington, California refinery on October 14, but it was not clear if the incident had any impact to production.

The refinery was already at reduced rates, at the time of the incident, due to a late-September fire, a news source said. Bloomberg News, 09:49 October 14, 2009. Posted to DOE website 10-14-09.

Cooling Tower Flaring at Flint Hills 300,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery October 13-14

Bloomberg News, 12:37 October 14, 2009. Posted to DOE website 10-14-09.

Update: Citgo to Restart Fire-Downed Alkylation Unit by October 28 at 163,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery—Traders

An explosion forced shut the unit on July 19, a previous news source said. Citgo delayed the restart amid safety concerns, according to the source.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idINN1447817720091014>

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20091006-705719.html>

Posted to DOE website 10-15-09.

Multiple Flaring Events at Valero’s 210,000 b/d Delaware City, Delaware Refinery by October 16

Bloomberg News, 07:28 October 16, 2009. Posted on DOE website 10-16-09.

Pontoon Compartment Leaks, Water and Debris Buildup and Tank Overfill Seen as Possible Causes of May 2009, 2 Million Gallon Gasoline-Grade Material Spill at Sinclair Oil’s Rawlins, Wyoming Refinery—State Department of Environmental Quality

http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/article_d75eb434-b9ec-11de-a26b-001cc4c03286.html Posted on DOE website 10-16-09.

FCCU at Murphy Oil’s 120,000 b/d Meraux, Louisiana Refinery Shut October 17, Restarts October 18

The unit was shut to repair a leak. Reuters, 12:15 October 19, 2009. Posted on DOE website 10-19-09.

Update: Valero Restarts Hydrocracker at its 315,000 b/d Corpus Christi, Texas Refinery October 19

The unit was shut on October 7 after a small fire. Reuters, 11:59 October 19, 2009. Posted on DOE website 10-19-09.