



Statement

U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY BOARD

October 30, 2009

The following statement from CSB Chairman John Bresland concerns OSHA's announcement today of regulatory action against BP Products North America and its Texas City refinery

Today's announcement by OSHA alleges extensive and serious safety violations by the BP refinery in Texas City, Texas. The citations stem from OSHA's continuing inspection work following the March 23, 2005, accident that killed 15 workers and injured 180 others. While these OSHA citations are not yet final, they are of great concern to me because they strongly suggest that BP has yet to achieve an effective safety culture with regard to process safety management.

OSHA's announcement underscores the need for BP to adopt the CSB safety recommendations issued in 2007 following our exhaustive two-year investigation of the 2005 accident. (The CSB report, and our 60-minute safety video on the tragic accident called "Anatomy of a Disaster" can be viewed at www.CSB.gov.)

I believe it's particularly important that the BP's corporate board of directors appoint an additional non-executive member with "significant professional expertise and experience in refinery operations and process safety," as we recommended. Such a position would provide process safety expertise at the highest level of decision-making. Thus far, BP has not adopted this CSB recommendation.

On January 14, 2008, there was another tragic accident at the Texas City refinery, which the CSB is investigating with a planned release of our report in March 2010. A BP supervisor was fatally injured when the top of a large steel filter housing suddenly blew off in the refinery's ultracracker unit. This was the third fatality at the refinery since the March 2005 explosion. This unit is across a roadway from the ISOM unit, where the 2005 accident occurred, and in fact many of the victims from 2005 were involved in projects in the ultracracker.

While OSHA reported that a potential for another catastrophic accident remains at BP Texas City, the CSB has found that safety problems continue across the U.S. refinery industry. The CSB has no fewer than seven ongoing investigations of significant refinery accidents at seven different companies throughout the country. Refinery accidents continue to occur with disturbing frequency, including releases of extremely hazardous substances such as hydrofluoric acid (HF).

Just last week, for example, at the Tesoro refinery in Salt Lake City, liquid hydrocarbons were released from a flare stack during an effort to restart the refinery's crude unit after a power failure. The hydrocarbons were ignited in a pool fire that extended from the base of the stack and damaged a trailer and other equipment that were positioned nearby. Our preliminary information indicates that this incident was

comparable to the March 2005 accident at BP. Both involved a liquid release during emergency disposal; both involved instrumentation and equipment failures within the relief system; and both involved the overfilling with liquid of equipment designed only to handle vapor releases.

The CSB continues to investigate the release of propane and small amounts of hydrogen fluoride at the ExxonMobil refinery in Joliet, Illinois, last August, as well as the major HF release which occurred at the CITGO refinery in Corpus Christi, Texas, last July. In addition, there was a massive explosion at the Sunoco refinery in Claymont, Delaware, last May. These continuing accidents indicate to me that refinery companies should take immediate steps to assure the highest level of process safety management to avoid the risk of the kind of catastrophic accident that took so many lives at BP.

In light of the OSHA announcement today, the CSB will continue to carefully examine BP's responses to all ten open CSB recommendations from our 2007 final report.

I urge BP to act expeditiously to implement all of them so that workers, communities, and the environment will be better protected.

END STATEMENT BY MR. BRESLAND

Note:

The CSB is an independent federal agency charged with investigating industrial chemical accidents. The agency's board members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. CSB investigations look into all aspects of chemical accidents, including physical causes such as equipment failure as well as inadequacies in regulations, industry standards, and safety management systems.

The Board does not issue citations or fines but does make safety recommendations to plants, industry organizations, labor groups, and regulatory agencies such as OSHA and EPA. Visit our website, www.csb.gov.

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