



U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board RECOMMENDATION STATUS CHANGE SUMMARY

Report:	Chevron Refinery Fire
Recommendation Number:	2012-3-I-CA-R32
Date Issued:	January 28, 2015
Recipient:	American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)
New Status:	Open – Acceptable Response or Alternate Response
Date of Status Change:	March 30, 2023

Recommendation Text:

Revise ASME PCC-2-2-11: Repair of Pressure Equipment and Piping to require users to follow the minimum process fluid leak response requirements established in API [American Petroleum Institute] RP 2001: Fire Protection in Refineries, developed in response to recommendation 2012-03-I-CA-R31¹, before conducting process fluid leak repair.

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On January 29, 2015, the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) issued its final investigation report pertaining to the August 6, 2012, incident at the Chevron Refinery in Richmond, California. On that date the refinery experienced a catastrophic pipe failure in a crude unit causing the release of flammable hydrocarbon process fluid which partially vaporized into a large vapor cloud. Nineteen Chevron employees engulfed by the vapor cloud escaped, narrowly avoiding serious injury. The ignition and subsequent continued burning of the hydrocarbon process fluid resulted in a large plume of unknown and quantified particulates and vapor. Approximately 15,000 people from the surrounding area sought medical treatment in the weeks following the incident.

¹ To the American Petroleum Institute: Revise API RP 2001: Fire Protection in Refineries to require users to develop a process fluid leak response protocol specific to their own facility that must be followed when a process fluid leak is discovered. Recommend users to incorporate the following actions into their leak response protocol:

- Establish an Incident Command structure upon identification of a process fluid leak;
- Conduct a pre-response meeting with personnel with specific technical expertise (e.g., inspectors, operators, metallurgists, engineers, and management) and the Incident Commander to determine pressure, temperature, remaining inventory of process fluids, potential damage mechanisms that caused the leak, and worst-case leak scenario;
- Establish a hot zone that identifies the area of risk of exposure or injuries due to flame contact, radiant heat, or contact to hazardous materials, taking into consideration the worst-case leak scenario;
- Limit site access around leak location to essential personnel only;
- Isolate the leaking piping or vessel, or if isolation is not possible, shutdown of the unit when the leaking poses immediate danger to safety, health, or the environment – such as piping fluid that is toxic or near the autoignition temperature.

The CSB noted that the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) issued PCC-2-2011, Repair of Pressure Equipment and Piping, which provides methods for repair of equipment and piping within the scope of ASME Pressure Technology Codes and Standards after they have been placed in service. It gives requirements for installing leak mitigation devices, such as clamps, which Chevron personnel considered installing at the location of the leak before the pipe rupture. The CSB found that while the standard does discuss safety requirements before installing a clamp, they are vague and lack needed preventative safety measures. The CSB determined that referencing other standards and recommended practices that give better guidance on leak mitigation and response would add significant value to the user. As a result of this finding, the CSB issued a recommendation to ASME.

B. Response to the Recommendation

Initially, ASME responded that they would not be adding a reference to API RP 2001. Recently, based upon additional communication between ASME and the CSB, ASME responded that they would add a reference to API RP 2001 as a recommended safe practice under the standard PCC-2 when the next edition is due in 2026.

C. Board Analysis and Decision

As ASME has committed to adding a reference to API RP 2001 in its standard PCC-2, the Board voted to change the status of CSB Recommendation No. 2012-3-I-CA-R32 to: “Open – Acceptable Response or Alternate Response.”