

Office of Investigations and Recommendations
Investigation Status Update
April 29, 2020

There was one new deployment since the last Business Meeting on January 29, 2020.

Wendland 1H Well

On January 29, 2020, a blowout and fire occurred at the Daniel H. Wendland 1H natural gas well in Burleson County, Texas. Three workers were fatally injured and one worker was seriously injured.

The investigation team is performing on-scene investigative activities, interviewing personnel, and reviewing relevant documents.

Listed below is the status of the agency's current investigations:

Watson Manufacturing and Grinding

On January 24, 2020, an explosion and fire event occurred at the Watson Manufacturing and Grinding Company in Houston, TX. The incident resulted in the fatal injury to two employees, one employee was seriously injured, and significant damage to commercial and residential property in the surrounding area. The Watson Company's operation included the powder coating of metal equipment primarily for the oil and mining industries. The powder coating process utilized propylene that was stored on-site in a bulk storage tank.

The investigation team is performing on-scene investigative activities, interviewing personnel, and reviewing relevant documents.

TPC Group

The TPC Group facility in Port Neches, Texas experienced a release of hydrocarbons on November 27, 2019 that resulted in a fire event and multiple explosions. The release occurred in the South Unit of the facility used in the production of 1,3-butadiene which is used primarily as a monomer in the production of a wide range of polymers and copolymers. The incident resulted in multiple injuries and property damage to both the facility and the surrounding area.

The investigation team is performing on-scene investigative activities, interviewing personnel, and reviewing relevant documents.

Aghorn Operating Inc.

On October 26, 2019, Aghorn Operating Inc. in Odessa, Texas experienced a loss of containment at a pump station that resulted in the release of Hydrogen Sulfide. One worker and one member of the public were fatally injured as a result of the release.

The investigation team is performing on-scene investigative activities, interviewing personnel, and reviewing relevant documents.

Philadelphia Energy Solutions

On June 21, 2019, a major process loss of containment resulted in a fire and several explosions at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions (PES) Refining Complex in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The incident occurred in the PES hydrofluoric acid alkylation unit. The unit was significantly damaged from the fire and multiple explosions.

The draft investigation report is in the final stage of review.

AB Specialty Silicones

On May 3, 2019, an explosion and fire event occurred during production of a silicon hydride emulsion at the AB Specialty Silicones facility in Waukegan, Illinois. The incident resulted in fatal injuries to four employees and the injury of at least one other employee. The explosion severely damaged the production facility and impacted neighboring facilities.

The investigation team is analyzing the factual information collected during the initial phase of the investigation.

KMCO

On April 2, 2019, an explosion and fire occurred at the KMCO facility in Crosby, Texas. KMCO is a producer of specialty chemical products. The company reported the release of isobutylene prior to the incident. The incident resulted in the fatal injury of one employee, two employees were seriously injured and over 25 workers (employees and contractors) were injured.

The investigation team is developing the draft final investigation report.

Intercontinental Terminals Company

On March 17, 2019, a large fire erupted at the Intercontinental Terminals Company, LLC (ITC) bulk liquid storage terminal located in Deer Park, Texas. The fire originated in the vicinity of Tank 80-8, an 80,000-barrel above-ground atmospheric storage tank. The tank contained naphtha, a flammable liquid typically used as a feedstock or blend stock for production of gasoline. ITC was unable to isolate or stop the release of naphtha from the tank and the fire continued to burn, intensify and progressively involve additional storage tanks at the facility. High levels of volatile organic compounds were present for approximately 13 weeks after the incident which delayed access to the incident location. The incident did not result in any injuries to either ITC personnel or emergency responders. The local community was impacted by the incident resulting in a shelter in place order and the closure of schools and businesses.

The investigation team is performing on-scene investigative activities, interviewing personnel, and reviewing relevant documents.

Kuraray American EVAL

On Saturday, May 19, 2018, an ethylene release and fire injured 23 workers at the Kuraray America Inc. (“Kuraray”) ethylene and vinyl alcohol copolymer plant (“EVAL Plant”) in Pasadena, Texas. At the time of the incident, 266 employees and contract workers were on site. During the incident, 2,347 pounds of ethylene were released in less than three minutes.

The incident occurred during the startup of a chemical reactor system following a turnaround.¹ High-pressure conditions developed inside the reactor, activating the reactor’s emergency pressure-relief system and discharging ethylene vapor into the atmosphere toward an area where many contractors were working. These workers were performing a variety of tasks that were not essential to the startup of the reactor, including hot work, which likely ignited the ethylene vapor creating the fire.

The draft investigation report is in the final stage of review.

Husky Energy Refinery (April 26, 2018)

On April 26, 2018, an explosion and subsequent fire occurred at the Husky Superior Refinery in Superior, Wisconsin. The explosion occurred while workers were shutting down the Fluid Catalytic Cracking (FCC) Unit for periodic maintenance and inspection. Twenty Husky employees and contract workers were injured, and a large portion of the town of Superior, Wisconsin was evacuated.

¹ A [turnaround](#) is a scheduled shutdown period when planned inspection, testing, and preventive maintenance, as well as corrective maintenance such as modifications, replacements, or repairs is performed.

The investigation team is reviewing documents and data collected during the initial phase of the investigation.

Didion Milling

On May 31, 2017, several explosions occurred at the Didion Milling facility in Cambria, Wisconsin. Didion performs corn milling at the Cambria facility. The dry corn milling process is a dust-producing operation and corn dust is known to be explosive under the right circumstances. Five employees were fatally injured, 14 workers injured, and there was significant damage to the facility as a result of this incident.

This investigation is on hold due to the lack of available investigative staff.

Loy-Lange Box Company

On April 3, 2017, a steam condensate (hot water) storage tank catastrophically failed at the Loy-Lange Box Company in St. Louis, Missouri. The force of the steam explosion ejected the storage tank from the Loy-Lange facility, travelled approximately 500 feet went through the roof of the Faultless Healthcare Linen facility. One Loy-Lange employee and 2 Faultless Healthcare Linen employees were fatally injured. One Loy-Lange employee was seriously injured and there was significant damage to both facilities.

The investigation team is reviewing documents and data in addition to the testing a component involvement in the incident.

Sunoco Logistics Partners

On August 12, 2016, a flash fire occurred during a welding operation (hot work) on a pipe manifold at Sunoco Logistics Partners terminal facility in Nederland, Texas. Seven contractors were injured as a result of this event.

This investigation is on hold due to the lack of available investigative staff.