

Statement of CSB Chairperson Dr. Rafael Moure  
Richmond City Council Meeting  
September 11, 2012

Good evening. Thank you for inviting the U.S. Chemical Safety Board to participate in tonight's city council meeting; I would like to especially thank Mayor McLaughlin for meeting with CSB staff members and organizing our participation in this evening's proceedings.

With me are: 1) CSB Managing Director Dr. Daniel Horowitz from Washington, DC; 2) the Director of the CSB's Western Regional Office in Denver –Don Holmstrom and 3) Investigators:

My name is Rafael Moure-Eraso and I am the Chairperson of the CSB. The CSB is an independent, non-regulatory federal agency that investigates serious chemical accidents. The CSB's investigations examine all aspects of chemical accidents including physical causes related to equipment design as well as inadequacies in regulations, industrial standards and safety management systems. Our investigations are always transparent and our findings are made public, and ultimately, we issue safety recommendations, which are designed to prevent similar accidents in the future. Again, our main objective is to prevent accidents –as the one that happened here at Richmond ---from happening in the first place.

The August 6 accident at Chevron refinery in Richmond was a close call for the workers and the refinery's neighboring residents. The cloud of flammable vapor released from an aging and thinning pipe could have had far worse consequences.

As the CSB knows too well, refinery accidents take lives, disrupt communities, cause significant damage and costs to the oil companies, and not incidentally, increase gas prices across the USA. I know that for many of you here today the events of August 6<sup>th</sup> remain a cause of great concern. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the CSB's commitment to determining the root cause of this accident and to reporting these findings to you, the members of the public and making recommendations for prevention.

An essential part of the CSB's mission is keeping members of the community updated on our activities. The CSB holds its own public meeting where investigators provide a detailed overview of an accident investigation. These meetings take place in the community where an accident occurred and are free and open to anyone interested in attending.

From my perspective CSB public meetings provide a unique opportunity for members of the public to gain an –in depth understanding of our investigative process. Sometimes, as today, we have ongoing and periodic reports of important findings. As I said before, the CSB prides itself on

transparency and has a strong commitment to keeping the community updated on our activities.

As we move forward with this investigation the board will keep the City of Richmond informed on our plans for public meetings right here in Contra Costa County.

I said earlier that the CSB knows all too well the devastating consequences that refinery accidents have and that is because we have a long history of investigating these accidents.

Currently the board is investigating several accidents at refineries across the US. These include the April 2, 2010, accident at the Tesoro refinery in Anacortes, Washington where a large heat exchanger suddenly ruptured, releasing flammable hydrocarbons and killing seven workers.

A few months earlier, in Woods Cross, Utah, a hydrogen pipe which had eroded and severely thinned, suddenly burst at the Silver Eagle refinery, triggering a powerful explosion that damaged more than 100 nearby homes.

At CITGO's refinery in Corpus Christi, Texas, a series of integrity-related failures in equipment holding highly toxic hydrogen fluoride have resulted in a worrisome series of releases threatening refinery workers, emergency responders, and members of the community.

These accidents show a widespread need for refineries to strengthen their process safety and preventative maintenance programs so that problems are detected before dangerous releases of flammable or toxic products.

The CSB, CalOSHA, EPA, Contra Costa County, and other agencies are working in a spirit of cooperation in our investigations. We also have the full cooperation of the plant employees represented by the USW as well as the Chevron Corporation.

Let me conclude by emphasizing the CSB's dedication to not only a comprehensive accident investigation but also my personal commitment to the safety of Chevron's workers and Chevron's neighbors.