

**U.S. Chemical Safety and
Hazard Investigation Board**

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Katherine A. Lemos
Chairman and CEO



September 27, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: CSB Opening Statement

To Committee Leadership,

Thank you for the opportunity to engage with you in the hearing titled, "Protecting Communities from Industrial Accidents: Revitalizing the Chemical Safety Board." We appreciate your support for the critical mission of this agency.

Please accept my opening remarks on the pages to follow.

Sincerely,

Dr. Katherine A. Lemos
Chairman and CEO
U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board
1750 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 910
Washington, DC 20006

Good Morning!

I am Dr. Katherine Lemos, and I'm proud to serve as Chairperson and CEO of the United States Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigations Board, or CSB.

As you know, our mission is to "*drive chemical safety change through independent investigations to protect people and the environment.*" Our vision is "*a nation safe from chemical disasters.*"

This is a critically important mission, to which we are fully committed.

We achieve this mission through three strategic goals: To advocate for safety, to prevent the recurrence of significant chemical incidents, and to maintain an engaged and high-performing workforce.

I'd like to address each of these.

First: Our strategic goal to advocate for safety, which involves achieving change through recommendations, outreach, and education.

In total, CSB has released 860 safety recommendations with 742 being closed. These recommendations have been issued to federal, state and local regulators and entities, as well as associations and private industry.

In FY21, CSB has issued 19 new safety recommendations, in comparison to zero for FY20.

In addition, a major focus of CSB in FY21 has been advancing and closing *previously* issued recommendations. This is a key driver to realizing positive safety change.

In FY21, CSB advanced 46 recommendations, 28 were closed *successfully*. In FY20, CSB advanced *only* 15 recommendations, four were closed *successfully*.

This increase in productivity shows our commitment to our mission.

Another strategic goal is to prevent recurrence of significant chemical incidents through independent investigations.

Over the years, CSB deployed to 146 incidents. These investigations meet our mandate to report the findings and analysis, to determine the probable cause and issue safety recommendations.

Even through the pandemic, following our COVID Safety Plan, CSB has continued to efficiently deploy to meet our mission.

We are adopting a more agile investigative model such that our approach to investigations and products better aligns with safety needs. As CSB executed in earlier years, we are implementing a range of investigative products that can reach the community in a timely manner. The CSB's Incident Reporting System is a benefit to our capturing more data on events that meet the criteria, and more efficiently.

In FY21, CSB made a commitment to increased transparency. We have demonstrated this through initiating *live* Board Meetings upon completion of investigations. This provides the public with insight into the staff's investigative process, the facts and analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. Further, the Board's deliberation occurs in real time.

In FY21, utilizing this new transparency process, we completed three investigations: Aghorn, AB Specialty Silicones and Evergreen Packaging. This compares to only one completed investigation in FY20.

Most investigations are featured on our YouTube safety video series, which addresses our mandate for outreach and education.

We are working diligently to complete the remaining 18 open investigations, while continuing to monitor incidents for additional investigations as they arise. Due to enhanced and consistent internal processes developed this year, we are poised to complete investigations more efficiently moving forward.

To accomplish the goals of safety through investigations and advocacy, **our third goal is to create and maintain an engaged, high-performing workforce.**

After accepting this role last year, I was shocked to learn of the low staff numbers. Our agency is critical to the safety and well-being of our workers, the public, communities, and environment.

To address this, we have prioritized hiring a robust, diverse, and engaged Mission Product Team. Right now, we are completing the hiring of four investigators, and will follow shortly by bringing on additional hires to round out the technical team. By year end FY23, our plan is to have an all-time high number of investigation and technical specialists on the Mission Product Team.

We also have increased technical contractor support, with expertise in specialized fields, such as metallurgy, blast modeling, and equipment testing. This enhances our capability, agility and reach without the need for employing all subject matter experts in-house.

To create more stability at the Agency, we are hiring key support staff and leadership at the career level. These include a staff Managing Director, a General Counsel, and a Chief Information Officer. This is in addition to onboarding a newly hired Human Resources Director and Procurement Manager.

Finally, CSB looks forward to onboarding new Presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed Board Members. These appointees are critical to our mission, bringing unique subject matter expertise and perspectives. This will help to ensure the integrity of our products while enhancing our advocacy.

Ultimately, we are committed to the CSB mission, we are committed to its growth, and we are committed to ensure that we can respond and react properly to catastrophic chemical events.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm pleased to answer any questions.