

FACT SHEET



U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) is an independent, non-regulatory federal agency that investigates the root causes of major chemical incidents. Our mission is to drive chemical safety change through independent investigations to protect people and the environment. The agency was authorized under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, and was funded in 1998.

The CSB is headed by a five-member board of chemical safety experts who are appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve five-year terms. The CSB is a scientific agency that operates independently from regulatory bodies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The CSB does not issue fines or citations, affix blame or apportion responsibility for accidents, or promulgate new regulations.

The Board employs a staff of approximately 40 people, of whom about half are professional chemical incident investigators. Our investigators have a wide variety of backgrounds including chemical and mechanical engineering, chemistry, law, and human factors safety. Each year, the CSB selects several major chemical accidents in the U.S. and conducts thorough root-cause investigations.

In the course of an investigation, the CSB gathers testimony from a broad array of witnesses, such as plant workers, managers, standards developing organizations, emergency responders, and members of the public. Investigators collect, examine, and test chemical samples, equipment, and other physical evidence. Incident sites are carefully studied and documented. In some cases, where there is community interest, the CSB conducts a community meeting while the investigation is still ongoing to release and discuss preliminary findings and gather testimony from members of the public, workers, and local officials.

At the end of the investigation, a formal written report is drafted and presented to the CSB Board members for approval. Board members discuss, review, amend, and ultimately vote on adoption of the report. CSB investigation reports are public documents, and they are available online at www.CSB.gov. The reports do not assign blame or identify specific individuals. The reports consider all the factors that lead to major incidents, such as inadequate process

design, training, maintenance, or engineering controls as well as gaps in regulations or oversight.

Each full-length report includes specific safety recommendations that are addressed to companies, trade organizations, labor groups, or other government agencies. Recommendations are developed based upon the specific root causes that are identified in the report. The purpose of the recommendations is to do everything possible to make sure that similar accidents do not occur in the future.

Once safety recommendations are issued, CSB staff work with recipients to explain and promote the rapid adoption of the recommended actions. Staff members track each recommendation to completion and report their conclusions to the CSB Board members, who must then vote whether to designate the safety recommendation as successfully closed. The status of all safety recommendations is available from www.CSB.gov.

The CSB works throughout the country to publicize the causes of incidents and to drive safety change in the chemical process industries. Board members appear in the news media, deliver speeches, meet with industry leaders, and regularly brief other government officials and Congressional representatives. The CSB also develops and distributes short products such as safety bulletins, safety videos and articles describing the causes of chemical incidents and measures to prevent them.

The CSB safety video program is used to disseminate the board's findings, recommendations, and lessons learned among a multitude of stakeholders. Safety videos have been a tool for achieving more widespread awareness of the causes of chemical incidents and the measures that can prevent them. CSB safety videos contain short, computer-animated depictions of events and can be viewed or downloaded over the Internet or obtained free of charge by filling out a web-based request form at www.safetyvideos.gov. The videos are also available on YouTube. Safety videos have been used worldwide to facilitate improvements in training, engineering and process design and help to prevent multiple tragic and costly workplace incidents.

For more information, visit our website, www.CSB.gov, or contact the public affairs office at public@csb.gov.

