



U.S. Chemical Safety and  
Hazard Investigation Board



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FY 2026 – 2030

# Strategic Plan

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## FY 2026 – FY 2030

### Strategic Plan

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## A Message from the Chairperson

I am honored to present the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's (CSB) FY 2026-2030 *Strategic Plan* on behalf of the agency's Board and professional staff. Under the agency's current leadership, the CSB has had one of the most productive periods in the agency's history and has become one of the most efficient and productive agencies in the federal government. Beginning in late July 2022, the CSB worked to completely eliminate the agency's enormous, long-standing backlog of open investigations that had accumulated under prior agency leadership, some dating as far back as 2016. Reducing the backlog so significantly took an extraordinary effort by every employee at the CSB, working together as a team.

All told, over the last three years, under the agency's current leadership, the CSB has issued 22 final investigation reports covering 24 incidents that involved 28 deaths, 115 serious injuries, and over \$3 billion in damage to chemical facilities and surrounding homes and businesses. The CSB had never before issued so many reports in such a short period of time. The CSB issued 161 safety recommendations as a result of these investigations.

Over the last 5 years, as new Board members arrived and the CSB's new leadership took office in 2022, in addition to eliminating the report backlog, the CSB has hired critical staff, reduced attrition, and increased transparency in the agency's operations, including making information about serious chemical incidents accessible to the public.

The FY 2026-2030 *Strategic Plan* will serve as guidance for the CSB's activities and help the agency focus resources on our congressionally mandated public safety mission. This Plan outlines our priorities as we move forward to hire and retain more professional staff, increase deployments at chemical incidents, continue enhanced use of information received under the agency's Accidental Release Reporting Rule (ARRR), increase transparency and information-sharing even further, and fulfill our charge to issue reports and recommendations aimed at keeping communities, workers, and the environment safe and free from chemical disasters.

The heart of the CSB is our team. Achieving our goals depends on the hard work and commitment of our dedicated career professional staff. A key focus over the next five years is to continue to grow, support, and develop our agency team so that we will have an experienced workforce sufficient to fulfill the critical public safety mission with which we have been charged by Congress.

### **Steve Owens**

Chairperson

U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

## Mission, Vision, and Strategic Goals

### **Mission**

Drive chemical safety excellence through independent investigations to protect communities, workers, and the environment.

### **Vision**

A nation free from chemical disasters.

### **Strategic Goals**

Advancing the mission in three ways.

Goal 1: Safeguard U.S. communities, workers, the environment, and our nation's critical industries by preventing recurrence of significant chemical incidents through independent investigations.

Goal 2: Advocate safety and achieve change through recommendations, outreach, and education.

Goal 3: Create and maintain an engaged, high-performing workforce.

## Introduction

The CSB is a multi-member independent nonregulatory agency created by Congress. The CSB's public safety mission as mandated by Congress is to investigate chemical incidents that result in fatalities, serious injuries, or substantial property damage, determine their cause or probable cause, and make recommendations to prevent such incidents from occurring again and minimize their consequences. Congress also mandated that the CSB must investigate any chemical incident that causes a fatality or serious injury among the general public or had the potential to cause substantial property damage or a number of deaths or injuries among the general public. The CSB is the only Federal agency with this statutory mandate. The CSB does not issue citations or fines but makes safety recommendations to companies, industry associations, standards-setting organizations, labor groups, and regulatory agencies.

To best serve the public and our stakeholders over the next five years, the CSB envisions a nation that is not only safe from chemical incidents, but free from such incidents to the greatest extent possible. Our mission is to drive chemical safety excellence through independent investigations to protect communities, workers, and the environment while adhering to our core values. Our vision is "a nation free from chemical disasters."

We will achieve our mission and our vision by conducting objective, independent investigations that display technical rigor at all stages—from deployment, to report release and follow-up on recommendations, to long-term advocacy and outreach. To support our efforts, we have developed strategic goals to improve our investigations, recommendations, outreach, and CSB human capital.

Specifically, we will review all reported incidents and strategically select ones for investigation that are likely to identify and address safety issues that will maximize industry learning and yield findings and recommendations that will protect both the public at large and a wide reach of stakeholders, going beyond just the companies and communities immediately impacted by the incidents.

We also will work with stakeholders from industry, labor, and the non-profit sector, as well as Federal, state, and local governments and others, to champion continual improvement in the chemical industry and disseminate lessons learned as broadly as possible. We will use a variety of tools to convey these messages, including our reports, safety products, advocacy events, website, social media presence, and our popular safety videos.

Perhaps most importantly, we will work to support our greatest resource—the CSB staff—and champion their continual improvement. We will work to grow our workforce by continuing to recruit highly qualified candidates to expand our investigative capacity and add additional value to industry and the public. We also will work to retain our current workforce by providing both a work environment that recognizes individual contributions to our mission and professional growth opportunities.

## Core Values

To achieve our goals, we must continually communicate and uphold these values across the organization.

**Objectivity:** Conduct independent investigations that collect, review, and analyze evidence to determine root causes and contributing factors and promote recommendations to keep communities and workers safe.

**Technical Rigor:** Perform thorough research, analysis, and reviews that contribute to well-designed, thoughtful, accurate, and reliable work products.

**Integrity:** Promote honesty, fairness, consistency, and transparency in our words and actions.

**Collaboration:** Support coalition building, teamwork, and resource-sharing internally and externally, including with current agency stakeholders and potential stakeholders.

**Dedication:** Demonstrate commitment to the employees, communities, and stakeholders whom we serve.

**Continual Improvement:** Create an internal culture that seeks to learn from all experiences, acquires new knowledge, considers all viewpoints, promotes mutual respect, provides responsibility, empowers employees, shares information, avoids silos, sets new goals, and applies lessons learned to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

## Background and Legislative Mandate

The CSB is an independent, nonregulatory Federal agency established to investigate incidents and hazards resulting from accidental releases of chemical substances that can cause death, serious injury, or substantial environmental or property damage. Congress created the CSB as a part of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, but the agency did not commence operations until 1998.

The CSB is governed by its Board, which by statute consists of one presidentially appointed Chairperson (who also serves concurrently as a board member), along with four other presidentially appointed board members. All nominations to the Board (including the Chairperson) are made by the President and are subject to Senate confirmation. Once confirmed by the Senate and then formally appointed by the President, each Board member is eligible to serve a five-year fixed term.

In March 2020, the CSB's Accidental Release Reporting Rule (ARRR) went into effect. This rule, which Congress directed the CSB to establish, requires owners and operators of stationary sources to report to the CSB any accidental release that results in a fatality, serious injury, or property damage in excess of one million dollars. Since the rule took effect in March 2020, the CSB has received over 550 reports of serious chemical incidents involving hundreds of fatalities, thousands of serious injuries, and billions of dollars in property damage.

The information provided to the CSB under the reporting rule has increased the CSB's opportunities for determining root causes and contributing factors, promoting transparency in our review and investigative procedures, and sharing learning through the investigation of these chemical release events. In 2022, as part of our commitment to transparency and information-sharing, the CSB began sharing information about chemical incidents reported under the ARRR on the CSB's website. Beginning in January 2025, the CSB further increased transparency by launching a new initiative to give the public more details about the serious chemical incidents that have been reported to the CSB under the ARRR. The CSB is compiling summaries of those incidents and is making the summaries available to the public on the CSB's website on a regular basis. During calendar year 2025, the CSB has issued summaries of 81 serious chemical incidents in 28 states, involving 14 fatalities, 65 serious injuries, and over \$3.5 billion in property damage.

CSB investigations have collectively identified gaps in regulatory requirements, industry standards and guidance, workforce training and operations, and emergency planning and response that caused or exacerbated the human and environmental consequences of chemical incidents. Throughout its history, the CSB has deployed to more than 180 chemical incidents and issued over 1,000 safety recommendations. The incidents that were investigated by the CSB resulted in more than 220 fatalities, over 1,300 injuries, and many billions of dollars in significant damage to property and the environment. The CSB's investigations and recommendations have resulted in safer industry practices that better protect communities, workers, and the environment and safeguard our nation's critical chemical and petrochemical infrastructure.

Typical CSB investigations delve into all aspects of chemical incidents: direct and proximate causes (e.g., equipment failures), underlying systemic and organizational causes (e.g., inadequacies in corporate or facility-level safety management systems and organizational culture), and opportunities for improving industry guidance documents and regulatory standards. As part of our written investigative products, the CSB issues safety recommendations to a variety of potential recipients, including federal and state regulatory agencies, companies, industry organizations, standard-setting bodies, emergency responders, and labor groups. Recommendations are then distributed further via safety videos, which are published on the CSB website as well as the CSB YouTube channel. Since the CSB established its YouTube channel in 2007, the agency has posted 101 safety videos, which collectively have received more than 70 million views. The CSB's YouTube page has over 400,000 subscribers. Multiple CSB videos have been viewed more than one million times.

Continuing and enhancing these activities helps the CSB move closer to reaching the goal of a United States free from chemical disasters.

## Strategic Goal 1

### **Safeguard U.S. communities, workers, the environment, and our nation's critical industries by preventing recurrence of serious chemical incidents through independent investigations.**

GOAL CONTEXT: The CSB will investigate incidents that will have the greatest impact on U.S. workplaces, communities, and the environment. The CSB's investigation reports provide the industry with valuable process safety information that can be used to assess a company's current operations and take the necessary action to eliminate or minimize the hazards identified during the agency's investigation. Because of the large number of incidents that occur each year, the CSB must exercise discretion when deciding whether to initiate an investigation, with the goal of driving chemical safety excellence. To that end, the agency prudently determines when to deploy to a chemical incident. The CSB will continue to refine the agency's information-gathering activities to ensure that its deployment decisions and resource allocations continue to be effective and efficient. The agency will continue to enhance its processes for completing investigations in a timely manner, while ensuring that key safety issues are addressed thoroughly in the resulting safety products.

### Strategic Objectives

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.1. Investigate or review incidents and hazards to generate recommendations or findings with broad preventive impact.**

The investigation and review of incidents allows the CSB to allocate its resources in a manner that promotes efficiency and productivity and leads to the development of findings and recommendations that identify and address critical chemical safety issues. In addition, the CSB will continue to collect data to identify and analyze existing industry hazards. The CSB, per its legislative mandate, may conduct broad safety studies of such hazards to examine commonalities among significant incidents and draw attention to key lessons learned.

The CSB will leverage the information provided to the agency under the Accidental Release Reporting Rule (ARRR) to identify and analyze trends and root causes across these reported events. This will enable the CSB not only to strategically investigate incidents to maximize preventive impact, but also to develop safety products that address issues affecting industry sectors more broadly.

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.2. Complete timely, high-quality investigations that determine the causes of incidents.**

The CSB will continue as necessary to revise, update, and improve the agency's processes and procedures for investigations and the production of investigation reports in order to advance the timeliness and quality of the products of our investigations. The CSB also will continue to enhance our review and utilization of information received under the CSB's ARRR.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3. Develop and issue recommendations with broad preventive impact.**

The CSB will strive to help achieve incident prevention and consequence mitigation by issuing recommendations to a variety of parties that are the most likely, or wield the most influence, to create safety change, including government entities, safety organizations, trade unions, industry associations, corporations, emergency response organizations, and educational institutions.

**Performance Measures**

- Number of deployments made to high-consequence incidents
- Timely production and dissemination of incident data and reports
- Time to complete a review or investigation
- Number of current investigations
- Number of backlogged investigations
- Number of completed investigation products

**Why This Strategy Will Work**

The CSB’s commitment to the investigation and review of chemical incidents will allow the agency to issue independent, technical investigation reports and recommendations with broad preventive impact, thereby informing all stakeholders of lessons learned and driving change for the prevention and mitigation of future incidents.

## Strategic Goal 2

### **Advocate safety and achieve change through recommendations, outreach, and education.**

GOAL CONTEXT: The CSB's safety recommendations, as well as the investigative facts and findings from which the recommendations are derived, are the conduits through which chemical safety change can be achieved. The CSB's objective is to share its findings and recommendations with as wide an audience as possible, while also directing advocacy efforts to those stakeholders who have the greatest responsibility and capability to enact and promote them. Therefore, the CSB collaborates with other organizations to promote its safety message and maximize the impact of agency resources.

The agency uses various outreach mechanisms to promote its chemical safety information and disseminate updates on recommendations' status, product releases, new initiatives, and public events. The agency has identified a list of "Drivers of Critical Chemical Safety Change" to guide the efficient use of limited resources to pursue the implementation of changes that are most likely to achieve important, nationwide safety improvements.

CSB investigation reports and safety videos make the Board's investigative findings available to millions of people in the United States and worldwide. They are available at [www.csb.gov](http://www.csb.gov).

### Strategic Objectives

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.1. Pursue the implementation of recommendations**

In addition to effective communication with recommendation recipients, the CSB will develop and maintain collaborative relationships with other agencies, industry, scientific, non-profit, and labor entities that are "agents of change" for chemical safety.

Board Members and staff will assist the Office of Recommendations in outreach efforts and relationship-building, targeted toward implementation of CSB recommendations to drive chemical safety improvement.

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.2. Identify and strategically promote key chemical safety issues.**

The CSB must identify and communicate key investigative findings to workers, industry, regulators, and the public. Communication strategies above and beyond investigative reports include: participation in public forums, symposia, and conferences on emerging safety issues, whether hosted by regulators, industry, labor, workforce, experts, non-profits, community groups, or other stakeholders; the production of thematic safety videos and video safety messages; the issuance of safety studies, safety alerts, safety bulletins, and other safety materials; the publication of articles relevant to CSB investigation findings; the use of social media; regular communications and interaction with other government agencies; and the development of electronic resources related to these critical topic areas.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3. Create and disseminate chemical safety information using a variety of engaging, high-visibility tools and products.**

The CSB will use a variety of creative, high visibility tools and products including investigation reports; public meetings and news conferences to share investigation findings and safety recommendations, including ones held in the communities affected by chemical incidents; regular business meetings (whether in person or virtual), to update the public and stakeholders on current agency initiatives; scholarly publications to educate others on critical safety topics; safety videos to disseminate lessons in a widely-accessible format; public discourse to engage with all stakeholders; and strategic use of social media to promote investigation findings, high-impact recommendations, and ongoing safety initiatives.

**Performance Measures**

Number of advocacy activities completed by the Board and staff to advance chemical safety improvements

Safety video YouTube channel growth

Number of safety videos viewed, website views, and publications downloaded

Number of outreach requests completed

**Why This Strategy Will Work**

The CSB's targeted advocacy for chemical safety change will allow the agency to use its resources strategically to promote actions that could have the greatest, most widespread preventive effects. This approach will not only allow the CSB to respond appropriately to changing industry conditions and emerging technology but also provide a framework for prioritizing both long-term and short-term agency goals.

## Strategic Goal 3

### **Recruit and maintain an engaged, high-performing workforce.**

GOAL CONTEXT: CSB employees are the agency's most valued asset. Goal 3 seeks to optimize our human capital resources to advance the agency's mission. By strategically leveraging employees' skills and expertise and developing an annual staffing plan, we will ensure the highest level of service to the public and strengthen CSB's performance and accountability to Congress and the American people.

The CSB strives for continual improvement to promote organizational efficiency throughout the agency. Focusing on CSB policies, procedures, and training will also help improve productivity, encourage adherence to the CSB's core values, and promote a code of conduct that all CSB employees should seek to follow. The CSB will invest in our employees by providing them with professional development opportunities to strengthen and enhance their current skill sets. This approach, along with strong managerial skills, mutual respect and open communications will foster an open environment that empowers employees to contribute ideas and solutions to their work.

### Strategic Objectives

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1. Implement effective recruiting and skills-based training and mentorship.**

To achieve significant human capital goals, the CSB will develop and update onboarding platforms, career ladders, individual development plans, Office of Personnel Management assessments, award and recognition programs, and skills-based training on both group and individual levels. The goal of these efforts is to provide employees with the skills needed to help the CSB continue to operate efficiently and effectively, which will also promote the retention of talented employees.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.2. Encourage leadership development and leadership at all levels.**

The CSB will implement leadership training to improve accountability and reward sound practices. The agency will incorporate a leadership skills development program for both the CSB's current leadership team and prospective leaders. This program will emphasize the importance of holding the agency's leadership accountable for making sound decisions and empowering others and will reward those who do.

The performance plans for the CSB's leadership will ensure accountability through clear expectations, regular feedback, and documented performance outcomes. Clear standardized expectations for both current and prospective leadership will ensure a culture where accountability is understood, practiced, and upheld.

**OBJECTIVE 3.3. Increase retention across the agency to ensure continuity.**

The CSB will continue to work to reduce the employee attrition rate, thereby increasing the continuity throughout the agency and enhancing overall performance and efficacy. Retaining agency staff year over year is critical to the timely completion of investigations, delivery of the overall mission, and ensuring a productive and supportive workplace environment. The CSB will promote an environment that fosters and values individual contributions and will provide appropriate professional development opportunities.

**OBJECTIVE 3.4. Strengthen operational performance and project management efforts.**

The CSB will achieve continued productive and efficient operational performance by adhering to agency and departmental action plans and making resource determinations based on their potential to advance the CSB's strategic goals. Using performance metrics identified in this plan, the CSB will create realistic sub-goals with metrics, milestones, and targets for each action plan item.

[Performance Measures](#)

Number of and time taken to fill essential open positions with new CSB hires

Implement leadership training to improve accountability and reward sound practices

Develop and implement targeted onboarding and mentoring plans

**Why This Strategy Will Work**

Current efforts in recruiting, onboarding, and retention are centered on building an effective workforce capable of fully executing and supporting the CSB mission. The CSB's strategies are grounded in proven organizational development practices that strengthen employee engagement and, in turn, enhance overall performance.

The CSB has long recommended that companies assess and improve their organizational cultures to promote safety and continual improvement. Over the next five years, the CSB will continue to apply these same principles to its own operations to increase organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and employee morale, thereby strengthening the CSB's ability to drive meaningful safety change and fulfill the agency's statutory public safety mission.

## Code of Conduct

All CSB employees will treat each other with mutual respect by:

- Conducting ourselves in a highly professional manner
- Communicating constructively and often
- Treating others as you want to be treated
- Valuing teamwork
- Taking personal responsibility for making the CSB a supportive, productive, and positive work environment
- Building trusting relationships
- Working collaboratively, include others when appropriate