



U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board RECOMMENDATION STATUS CHANGE SUMMARY

Report:	TPC Port Neches Explosions and Fire
Recommendation Number:	2020-02-I-TX-R5
Date Issued:	December 13, 2022
Recipient:	American Chemistry Council
New Status:	Open – Awaiting Response or Evaluation/Approval of Response
Date of Status Change:	Not Applicable – Initial Status

Recommendation Text:

Revise the Butadiene Product Stewardship Guidance Manual to provide guidance on a methodology to help identify what should be considered excessive or dangerous amounts of popcorn polymer in a unit. Provide mitigation strategies that describe the actions that owner/operators should take during those polymer excursions to control or eliminate the popcorn polymer to reduce the likelihood of popcorn polymer-induced process loss of containment.

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On the morning of November 27, 2019, a dead leg between the Final Fractionator A and the manual isolation valve upstream of an offline pump in the TPC Group Port Neches Operations facility's butadiene unit ruptured. As a result of the rupture, approximately 6,000 gallons of liquid, primarily butadiene, was released. The liquid butadiene vaporized upon release forming a flammable vapor cloud that ignited moments later causing multiple fires and explosions. After the initial fires were contained, smaller fires burned for more than one month while isolation efforts were underway.

During the initial explosion two TPC Group employees and a security contractor suffered non-life-threatening injuries. Jefferson County officials reported that five additional minor injuries were suffered by residents of the community. Additionally, the blast damaged nearby homes and buildings and was reportedly felt as far away as 30 miles from the facility. County officials declared a state of disaster and multiple shelter-in-place and evacuation orders were issued.

As a result of the incident, the butadiene unit was completely destroyed and butadiene production operations ceased indefinitely. The incident caused \$450 million in on-site property damage, and an additional \$153 million in off-site property damage. The facility has since been transitioned to a "terminal and services" operation and on June 1, 2022 TPC Group filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) investigated the incident and found several safety issues including failures in dead leg identification and control, process hazard analysis action item implementation, control and prevention of popcorn polymer, and providing remotely operated emergency isolation valves. As a result of these findings, the CSB issued two recommendations to the American Chemistry Council. This status change summary addresses **CSB Recommendation No. 2020-02-I-TX-R5**.