



U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

RECOMMENDATION STATUS CHANGE SUMMARY

Report:	Third Coast Industries Petroleum Products Facility Fire
Recommendation Number:	2002-03-I-TX-R3
Date Issued:	March 6, 2003
Recipient:	International Code Council (ICC)
New Status:	Open – Acceptable Response or Alternate Response
Date of Status Change:	September 16, 2026

Recommendation Text:

Revise the International Fire Code to address the following issues: For facilities that are not staffed around the clock, specify circumstances where automatic fire detection is needed. Narrow exemptions for Class IIIB liquids. Expand fire protection analysis requirements to include all areas of a facility where there may be flammable or combustible fire risks.

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On the night of May 1, 2002, a fire erupted at the Third Coast Industries (Third Coast) facility near Friendswood, Texas. The facility blended and packaged motor oils, hydraulic oils, and other highly flammable liquids. Firefighters arrived at the scene within minutes but were unable to control the fire. The facility burned for 24 hours and consumed 1.2 million gallons of combustible and flammable liquids, destroying the entire site. One hundred nearby residents were evacuated, a local school was closed, and significant environmental cleanup was needed.

The CSB investigation concluded that the facility did not have sufficient fire protection measures in place to detect or control a fire. The facility was not equipped with smoke/fire detection equipment or alarms, was not staffed at night, and there was no source of water for manual or automatic fire suppression.

Storage tanks in the Third Coast facility contained Class IIIB liquids and other Class IB and Class II liquids. At the time of the incident, the CSB investigation concluded that approximately 98% of the materials at Third Coast were classified as Class IIIB combustible liquid (flash point greater than 200 degrees Fahrenheit). The International Fire Code (IFC) exempts this group of liquids from the same storage requirements as Class I and II liquids.

In addition, Third Coast did not conduct a fire protection analysis. An evaluation of the facility for fire hazards might have identified shortcomings in the facility's fire detection and protection systems, drainage, onsite water supply and both manual and automatic fire suppression systems. The IFC at the time of the incident did not clearly address these issues.. This status change summary addresses CSB Recommendation No. 2002-03-I-TX-R3.

B. Response to the Recommendation

ICC has notified the CSB that language intended to meet the recommendation has been approved for the 2027 Edition of the International Fire Code (IFC 2027). IFC 2027 is expected to be published in the fall/winter of 2027. Once the code is published the CSB can evaluate this recommendation for closure.

C. Board Analysis and Decision

Based upon the information above, the Board voted to change the status of CSB Recommendation No. 2002-03-I-TX-R3 to: “Open – Acceptable Response or Alternate Response.”