



# Director's Corner

March 23, 2010 was the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BP, Texas City incident. It is impossible to coherently and concisely describe everything I feel today even after the passage of five years. Naturally, I feel a lot of sadness and grief over the tragedy. It changed a lot of lives and also led to the unique settlement resulting in gifts to Texas A&M University and other organizations. But then I also feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in the quality and value of the programs of the Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center that have been supported and strengthened by this gift.

First, let me say this to everyone who lost their loved ones in this tragedy. We are saddened by this tragedy and the loss of your loved ones. I know there is no way to lessen your grief or replace your loss. We mourn with you and please trust me when I say that we, at the Center, are doing our best in our efforts in teaching, research, and service activities. We truly and sincerely believe that education can be an influencing factor as we move towards improving safety performance in the industry.

Second, I want to recognize BP for taking complete responsibility for the incident, conducting a thorough internal incident investigation, cooperating with various external investigations, and commissioning an unprecedented blue-ribbon panel headed by Secretary Baker to look at organizational causes that led to the incident. All of these investigations led to significant lessons learned and recommendations for improved plant design, operations, and management systems. I am gratified to note that there is a significant effort to implement the lessons learned from the Texas City disaster not only at BP, but throughout the industry.

Third, Texas A&M University's Dwight Look College of Engineering is nationally known for its engineering safety and ethics programs. The donation has benefited Texas A&M's Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center and other programs in many ways:

- Aerosol equipment
- Retrofitting of dust explosion equipment
- Development of fire suppression materials
- Limited amount of LNG experiments and testing
- Scholarships for safety engineering certificate for Under Graduates
- General support for graduate students engaged in process safety research
- Augmentation of engineering ethics program
- Support for MS in Safety Engineering

Of course, these programs are in addition to continuation of a host of other programs and research activities that enhance safety in the chemical process industries. The use of chemicals is a two-edged sword. Safe use creates a healthier economy and a higher standard of living. Unsafe use threatens our lives, our businesses, and ultimately our world. Often it's not a matter of can we be safe, but do we choose to be safe.

*Making safety second nature* is part of our mission. Our primary mission is to provide education and research opportunities to graduate and undergraduate students studying in the center. These young people are the ones who are preparing to enter the workforce with a sound grounding in process safety, and they can make a difference in the future of workplace safety. We have established aggressive programs for teaching, research and service. In teaching, we have introduced undergraduate and graduate curriculum in process safety and risk assessment. We also have established continuing education and training programs for industry professionals. In research, we currently have the largest research group by any measure - 30 graduate students - conducting research in various areas of process safety including new and emerging areas. In service, we have established outreach programs with various organizations and universities both in the US and overseas.

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