

Director's Corner

In the summer issue, I wrote about the 30th anniversary of the Bhopal (India) methyl isocyanate gas release tragedy. The December edition of the *Loss Prevention Bulletin* commemorates the tragedy as well. The

December *Loss Prevention Bulletin* was made available to everyone on a complimentary basis as “a timely reminder of where we have been, but also how far we still have to go in implementing the learnings from this event” (Trish Kerin, Director IChemE Safety Center). In early December the *International Conference on Safety (ICS 2014)* at IIT-Gandhinagar held a special focus *Symposium on Process Safety (SPS2014)* to bring together national and international thought leaders in Process Safety to answer the question, “Have we really made progress since Bhopal?”



Obviously, there are a lot of people in academia and industry who take these issues very seriously and do not want to see such a tragedy ever occur again—tragedies that can be prevented. Publications, monologues, and books are being devoted to this topic. International, national and regional conferences and symposia are being organized to bring together thought leaders, researchers, practitioners, and regulators to discuss these issues of great importance. However, an important question we still cannot answer with any kind of quantitative certainty is if we are getting better.

Tragedies such as Bhopal are catalysts for change, but that change is not always driven because of legislation. There is no one who goes to work and thinks that it will be okay for him/her not to return home on that day because of an incident. That is why the goal of zero incidents is something that we must all work towards. However, we must recognize that this elusive goal will only be accomplished by the joint collaboration of everyone working in academia, government and industry through education, training and outreach. Facilities processing hazardous materials must also recognize that zero incidents can only be accomplished through the

contribution of each and everyone in the organization. And that is why everyone in the organization must have responsibilities with regard to process safety and be held accountable for those responsibilities.

You all have heard me talk about the need for a national repository for chemical incidents. Currently, there are many federal, state and local agencies collecting data. There are also data collection systems for incidents and near-misses within companies. However, there is no national repository that can be used to trend incidents and provide a statistical analysis of incident causation and other factors. There could be many other applications of such a national repository.

One pertinent question, our readers and constituents might and should ask, "What is the Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center doing with regard to these important issues? Obviously, there are the numerous research projects and other activities being conducted by the Center that benefit the industry and government. But the most important and meaningful accomplishment of the Center is increasing the number of highly skilled engineers (ingrained deeply with process safety principles) going into industry, academia and government and increasing the footprint of process safety programs. Our hope is that this new breed of engineers will make a significant impact on improving the process safety performance in the industry. However, we at the Center and Texas A&M University cannot do it alone. Other universities must join in and start their own programs. We at MKOPSC stand ready to provide support and assistance to any university who want to start their own programs. With regard to that, you have my personal commitment as well.

If process safety is to be a key facet of mainstream engineering education, we must ensure the next generation of engineers is both adept and dedicated to recognizing and defining critical issues related to process safety. They must be proficient in the synthesis and application of innovative solutions to address these issues and, in the end, make tangible and quantitative progress towards our goal of zero incidents.

Wishing everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

M. Sam Mannan

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