



South Plains Chapter Newsletter & GA Update for July 2006

Drive Continues for New Members

The South Plains Chapter continues in its membership drive to reach our goal of 40 members. We are currently at 34.

To assist us in gaining the new members, National is waiving the \$25 processing fee and South Plains Chapter is waiving the \$15 Chapter fee. A savings of \$40.

Also, please welcome new members, Eddie Greer with Atmos Energy and Pamela Kottkamp with Texas Tech Health Sciences Center in Amarillo. We're glad to have you.

South Plains Chapter Sponsors ASSE Telephone Conferences

The Chapter sponsored two recent telephone conference calls. The training was provided free of cost to both members and guests.

- On June 22, 2006 Freddie Reyna with Benton and Associates hosted "Addressing the Issue of Slip Resistance and the Safety of Walking/Working Surfaces".
- On July 26, 2006 Jack Haning with CSG hosted, "Addressing the Issue of Confined Space."

Thank you to each of our host companies for providing facilities and food for our meetings.

House Appropriates Increases in OSHA and MSHA Spending in FY 07

The House Appropriations Committee marked up its FY 2007 spending bill and included were increases to OSHA and MSHA, as indicated below.

Reports are that language continues to bar OSHA from enforcing annual hospital TB-fit testing of respirators, calls on OSHA to report on status of its employer payment for PPE standard, and funding for Harwood training grants that the Administration continues to try to make disappear.

Also, NIOSH has lost language from previous appropriation law that has protected to some extent its organizational identity within the CDC. More info as it becomes available.

OSHA Funding:

FY 2006: 472,427

FY 2007 Budget Proposal: 483,667

Committee Recommendation: 486,051

- Difference between FY 2006 and Cmte. Recommendation: +13,624
- Difference between Budget Request and Cmte. Recommendation: +2,384

MSHA Funding:

FY 2006: 277,686

FY 2007 Budget Proposal: 287,836

Committee Recommendation: 278,869

- Difference between FY 2006 and Cmte. Recommendation: +1,183

ASSE Comments on DOE Reorganization

ASSE has taken issue with DOE's intention to merge its Office of Environment, Safety and Health into the newly established Office of Safety and Security Performance, which we fear will make it difficult for worker safety issues to get the attention needed within a structure that no doubt will have to focus on nuclear safety and security issues.

ASSE will be contacting key Congressional leaders on this issue.

On the inside...

- **Mine Safety Bill is now Law – Page 2**
- **More OSHA Stuff – Page 2**
- **EPA News – Page 3**
- **NIOSH Update – Page 5**
- **DOT Update – Page 6**
- **Reports on Asbestos Danger in Gulf Cleanup – Page 6**
- **Asbestos Danger – Contractors Ignoring Safety Rules – Page 6**
- **CSB Reports on 2004 Houston Explosion – Page 7**
- **CSB Reports on 2004 Praxair Explosions – Page 8**
- **On the Back Page – ASSE Meeting Schedule & Upcoming Boiler Safety Seminar in October.**

Mine Safety Bill Now Law

Significant is the first occupational safety and health bill that has passed into law in a long time. Sad that it took the deaths of 11 miners for Congress to act.

Positive was the way the Senate HELP Committee – including some very talented staff members from both sides of the aisle - under Chairman Enzi's leadership as well as Senator Kennedy's as the Ranking Member really worked hard in a bipartisan manner to craft a bill that, except for the requirement that MSHA be notified within 15 minutes of a possible emergency, should help in improving mine safety greatly, in ASSE's view.

ASSE hopes that the bipartisan effort can continue in addressing non-mine issues, also.

Key provisions of the "MINER Act" will:

- Require each covered mine to develop and continuously update a written emergency response plan;
- Promote use of equipment and technology that is currently commercially available;
- Require each mine's emergency response plan to be continuously reviewed, updated and re-certified by MSHA every six months;
- Direct the Secretary of Labor to require wireless two-way communications and an electronic tracking system within three years, permitting those on the surface to locate persons trapped underground;
- Require each mine to make available two experienced rescue teams capable of a one hour response time;
- Require mine operators to make notification of all incidents/accidents which pose a reasonable risk of death within 15 minutes, and sets a civil penalty of \$5,000 to \$60,000 for mine operators who fail to do so;
- Establish a competitive grant program for new mine safety technology to be administered by NIOSH;
- Establish an interagency working group to provide a formal means of sharing non-classified technology that would have applicability to mine safety;
- Raise the criminal penalty cap to \$250,000 for first offenses and \$500,000 for second offenses, as well as raise the maximum civil penalty for flagrant violations to \$220,000;
- Give MSHA the power to request an injunction (shutting down a mine) in cases where the mine has refused to pay a final order MSHA penalty;
- Create a scholarship program available to miners and those who wish to become miners and MSHA enforcement staff to head off an anticipated shortage in trained and experienced miners and MSHA enforcement;
- Establish the Brookwood-Sago Mine Safety Grants program to provide training grants to better identify, avoid and prevent unsafe working conditions in and around the

mines. These grants will be made on an annual, competitive basis to provide education and training for employers and miners, with a special emphasis on smaller mines.

More OSHA Stuff

OSHA Announces 2006 SSTs

OSHA on May 30 announced that about 4,250 high hazard work sites are targeted for unannounced inspections this coming year under its 2006 site-specific targeting plan.

About 4,400 were targeted in 2005. Compliance Directive Number 06-01 (CPL 02) setting out this year's program can be found at http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive_pdf/CPL2_06-01.pdf

Here's OSHA's take on it from QuickTakes –

OSHA's Targeted Inspection Plan for 2006

About 4,250 high-hazard worksites are on tap for inspection under OSHA's [2006 Site-Specific Targeting Program](#), effective June 12.

This year's program will initially target sites that reported 12 or more injuries or illnesses resulting in days away from work, restricted work activity, or job transfer for every 100 full-time workers (known as the DART rate).

The list will also include sites that have a days away from work injury and illness (DAFWII) rate of 9 or higher. The program stems from the agency's Data Initiative for 2005, which surveyed approximately 80,000 employers to attain their injury and illness numbers for 2004.

OSHA Re-establishes MACOSH

June 5, 2006 - OSHA has given notice that it has re-established the Maritime Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (MACOSH). <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-8656.htm>

OSHA Announces New Compliance Assistance Resources

[Best Practices Guide: Fundamentals of a Workplace First-Aid Program](#) (OSHA Publication 3317) (May 2006) ([OSHA press release](#)). This publication can help employers develop workplace first aid programs. It reviews the primary components of a workplace first-aid program and also includes best practices for planning and conducting first-aid training.

[Best Practices for the Safe Use of Glutaraldehyde in Health Care](#) (OSHA Publication 3258) (April 2006). This booklet helps employers and employees understand and control exposures to glutaraldehyde, a toxic chemical used to disinfect and clean heat-sensitive medical, surgical, and dental equipment.

OSHA Debuts Spanish-Language Newsletter

Hispanic workers and employers in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands will stand to benefit from a new electronic, Spanish-language newsletter produced by OSHA's New York Region.

[Cápsulas de Salud y Seguridad](#) presents a cross section of information on workplace safety and health issues, particularly those affecting Hispanic workers.

Each issue will feature topics designed to educate and guide readers in their efforts to reduce hazards and improve safety and health in their workplaces.

To obtain a copy, or receive future editions, e-mail prvi-osha-news@dol.gov. The newsletter is also available on OSHA's [Spanish-language Web page](#).

OSHA Summer Safety Publications Online

Safety on the job this summer is the impetus behind OSHA's promotion of a series of [QuickCards](#) and other hot weather advisory [products](#), all of which are freely accessible from the agency's Web site.

The publications address a range of potential hazards that come from working outdoors in high temperatures—from heat exhaustion and harmful sunlight to Lyme disease and West Nile virus.

Copies of these products can also be ordered by contacting OSHA's publications office at (202) 693-1888.

OSHA Issues Directive on Fed Consultation Cooperative Agreements

OSHA has published a directive providing help to consultation project managers and OSHA regional staff in preparing Federal Consultation Cooperative Agreement Applications, which is at http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=DIRECTIVES&p_id=3351.

EPA News

EPA Proposes No Permits for Water Transfers

(Washington, DC - June 1, 2006) A rule proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would clarify that permits are not required for transfers of water from one body of water to another.

Such transfers include routing water through tunnels, channels, or natural stream courses for public water supplies, irrigation, power generation, flood control, and environmental restoration.

Thousands of water transfers currently in place across the country are vital to the water infrastructure. Whether a permit is needed under the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) has been an issue in numerous court cases in recent years.

The proposed rule would define such transfers as the movement of water between bodies of water with no intermediate use, such as manufacturing or agriculture.

In 2004, the question of whether NPDES permits were necessary for water transfers went before the U.S. Supreme Court in *South Florida Water Management District v. Miccosukee Tribe of Indians*.

The court did not rule directly on the issue, generating uncertainty about the need for a permit. EPA concluded in 2005 that Congress intended water resource-management agencies and other state authorities to oversee water transfers, not the NPDES permitting program. This rulemaking codifies that conclusion.

EPA will accept comments on the proposed rule for 45 days. More water transfers information: http://www.epa.gov/npdes/agriculture#water_transfer

EPA Proposes NESHAP for Organic Hazardous Air Pollutants from Synthetic Organic Chemical Industry

June 14, 2006 - In 1994, EPA promulgated National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for the synthetic organic chemical manufacturing industry (SOCMI), commonly known as the hazardous organic NESHAP (HON) and established maximum achievable control technology (MACT) standards to regulate the emissions of organic hazardous air pollutants (HAP) from production processes that are located at major sources.

The Clean Air Act (CAA) directs EPA to assess the risk remaining (residual risk) after the application of the MACT standards and to promulgate additional standards if required to provide an ample margin of safety to protect public health or prevent adverse environmental effect.

It also requires EPA to review and revise MACT standards, as necessary, every eight years, taking into account developments in practices, processes, and control technologies that have occurred during that time.

Based on its findings, EPA is proposing two options equally for emissions standards for new and existing SOCMI process units. Comments are due August 14, 2006.

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/06-5219.htm>

EPA Provides Info on Hurricane Prep

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is providing information for people, businesses and state and local governments on preparations to make before hurricane force winds or storm flooding may occur. This information is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/hurricanes>

Hurricane season is identified and that allows for early preparations that can minimize injury and property damage. Households and businesses should take this opportunity to start planning at the beginning of the hurricane season and prepare well in advance.

EPA's hurricanes Web site includes information for business operators on preventing and reporting chemical releases due to severe weather - which can be required by law. Local governments and community agencies can find suggestions for preparing and protecting water and wastewater facilities. There is also detailed information for debris planning, since storm debris can occur in enormous amounts that overwhelm local landfills, and can also present serious dangers to human health and the environment.

EPA Issues Hurricane Prep Info in Spanish

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched a new hurricane preparedness Web page in Spanish to provide information to Spanish speakers and Hispanic businesses nationwide, including Puerto Rico.

Early preparations during hurricane season can minimize injury and property damage. Households and businesses should take this opportunity to start planning at the beginning of the hurricane season and prepare well in advance.

Hurricane preparedness information:

<http://www.epa.gov/espanol/hurricanes.htm>

More general environmental information in Spanish:

<http://www.epa.gov/espanol>

House Effort to Block EPA from Relaxing Toxic Reporting

The following is from Occupational Hazards at <http://www.occupationalhazards.com/articles/15241>

[House Votes to Prevent EPA from Easing Toxics Reporting Requirements](#) - - Josh Cable 06/01/2006

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed an amendment that denies EPA any funds to implement or enforce the agency's proposed "Burden Reduction" rule that would relax reporting requirements for the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI).

Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., D-N.J., sponsored the amendment, which was attached to the fiscal year 2007 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill (H.R. 5386). Pallone's amendment passed 231-187, with 182 Democrats supporting it and 172 Republicans voting against it.

Pallone, when introducing the amendment on the House floor, noted that TRI was created in response to the Union Carbide chemical explosion in Bhopal, India, that killed thousands.

"We have the program so we know where we might have the potential for another Bhopal, but also so we know where slow, silent releases of toxic chemicals could pose serious threats to public health," Pallone said.

EPA Proposes that Reporting Take Place Every Other Year

EPA in October initiated formal procedures to relax reporting requirements for TRI, a publicly accessible database listing the type and quantity of toxic chemicals that companies release into the environment. The agency says the proposed changes are part of an ongoing effort to reduce the amount of paperwork companies must fill out.

The agency is proposing to lower reporting thresholds so that more companies are eligible to use the shorter and less-detailed TRI form, called "Form A." EPA also is proposing that companies report toxic chemical releases to TRI every other year instead of every year.

Sean Moulton, director of federal information policy for the Washington-based government watchdog group OMB Watch, characterized the House vote as a "clear message to the EPA that [lawmakers] and their constituents value the public's right to know about toxic pollution."

"The EPA's attempts to roll back reporting on toxic pollution are unacceptable to so many Americans and their representatives have expressed that with their vote," Moulton said.

OMB Watch, which attempted to galvanize opposition to the proposed Burden Reduction rule through a letter-writing campaign, says that EPA received more than 113,000 public comments on the rule. Among the comments EPA received was a letter signed by 56 members of Congress urging the agency to withdraw its rule proposal.

Tiahrt: Pallone Amendment an 'Assault' on American Jobs

Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan., objected to Pallone's amendment, calling it "a direct assault on the jobs in America." He said the TRI reporting requirements are particularly onerous for small businesses, and he cited data from the Small Business Administration Advocacy Group estimating that regulatory compliance cost manufacturing firms with fewer than 20 employees \$21,919 per employee in 2004 – compared to \$8,748 per employee for firms with 500 or more workers.

"The average citizen does not gain any public health benefits" from the TRI, Tiahrt said on the House floor. "Instead, small businesses have to comply with the EPA reporting rule and are literally wasting tens of millions of dollars every year, and it is costing us good-paying jobs. These jobs end up in other countries, offshore."

Rep. Charles Taylor, R-N.C., who chairs the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, accepted Pallone's amendment "with the understanding that we will work with EPA to determine how we can accomplish the amendment's goals without placing unnecessary reporting burdens on businesses that release no toxics or have only trace amounts."

The amendment, along with the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill – which sets EPA's budget – now move over to the Senate.

NIOSH Update

NIOSH Seeks Comment on Dust Monitor Draft Report

NIOSH is requesting public comment on a Draft Report of Investigations, "Laboratory and Field Performance of a Respirable Personal Dust Monitor."

The draft report addresses the laboratory and field testing of the Personal Dust Monitor (PDM). Comments will be accepted until June 30, 2006.

A copy of the draft report and links for filing comments by email and online can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/review/public/du-stmonitor>.

Included in the draft report for public comment are extensive technical data and discussions, such as descriptions of the PDM, the tests performed on the equipment, detailed data from test results, and the conclusions drawn from the results.

The draft report concludes that, based on the findings of the tests, the device "functioned as well as the current sampler in terms of availability for use, accuracy, precision, and miner acceptance."

New NIOSH Page on Flavorings-Related Lung Disease

A new NIOSH Topic Page provides a resource for findings and recommendations by NIOSH to reduce the risk of severe obstructive lung disease ([bronchiolitis obliterans](#)) associated with occupational exposures to flavorings.

Bronchiolitis obliterans is a serious, irreversible lung disease whose symptoms include cough and shortness of breath on exertion.

The topic page provides background on NIOSH's extensive research into this occupational disease, outlines the symptoms associated with and treatment for bronchiolitis obliterans, and discusses recommended control measures for reducing job-related exposures to flavorings.

Also on the page are links to key NIOSH resources and reports stemming from its research. We invite you to review the Topic Page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/flavorings/>. The page includes an email address for providing feedback and receiving updates of information, Flavorings@cdc.gov.



NIOSH Mobile Medical Unit to Test Underground Coal Miners

A new mobile medical unit provides underground coal miners with the opportunity to receive confidential lung disease screening in close proximity to where they work, live or shop.

This new NIOSH resource will assist researchers, medical professionals, and others in identifying the distribution and prevalence of coal workers' pneumoconiosis (CWP) or black lung disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in U.S. coal miners.

The self-contained unit provides individual privacy and state-of-the-art equipment for education, interviewing, x-ray screening, and lung function testing. The Mine Safety and Health Administration provided initial funding for the unit.

To date, 581 miners have been screened in initial uses of the new unit, and further screening visits are planned for the near future in Virginia and Kentucky.

Information obtained from the mobile screening activities will help identify conditions and locations where current occupational exposures may pose a risk for CWP, and where interventions may be needed to reduce exposures, prevent the onset of CWP, or identify cases of illnesses for appropriate treatment. To learn more about the program and the Mobile Medical Unit, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/surveillance/ORDS/CoalWorkersHealthSurvProgram.html> or contact Anita Wolfe at AWolfe@cdc.gov.

NIOSH Update on National PPE Tech LabT

Between February and May, 160 applications were submitted to NIOSH for approval of new respirators or extension of approvals for currently approved respirators.

129 were approved or extended, of which 8 were devices intended for protection against chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) agents.

Three NIOSH-issued user notices were posted on NIOSH's Web page in March and April. A new category of user notices has been added for the Department of Transportation. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl>.

As requested by our stakeholders, the Respirator Standard Test Procedures have now been posted on the NIOSH Web page. This enables manufacturers to review the test procedures that the products will undergo during testing for NIOSH certification. Additional procedures will be added as they are updated.

http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/stps/respirator_testing.htm.T

VPPA Announces Texas City Safety Tax Incentive

City Commissioners Agree to Offer Tax Incentives for Industrial Facilities Earning OSHA VPP Certification

FALLS CHURCH, VA, June 16, 2006 - The city of Texas City, Texas, located approximately 40 miles southeast of Houston, last week enacted an innovative provision within its tax code that offers tax incentives for industrial facilities that demonstrate a commitment to safe operations by becoming certified in the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's (OSHA) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). VPP certification is OSHA's highest honor to recognize the nation's most effective industrial safety and health programs.

"We applaud Texas City's leaders for this proactive and unprecedented effort that promotes not only a safer industrial district, but a safer community," said R. Davis Lane, Executive Director of the VPP Participants Association. "VPP can significantly improve a facility's safety performance. And now, Texas City companies will have added financial incentives to participate in the program and earn VPP certification. This is an outstanding precedent that we hope local governments throughout the country will follow."

Texas City officials outlined and approved the plan at their June 7 City Commission Meeting. The language in the provision states that if an industrial entity has achieved OSHA VPP certification, the facility's owner is entitled to a 20 percent tax abatement each year for five years (from the second year after it receives certification through the seventh year), provided the owner maintains VPP designation.

"The Voluntary Protection Program is a great way for the City to have a measurable standard for our abatement program," said Texas City Mayor Matthew T. Doyle. "VPP also provides that management and labor work together to achieve a common goal. The money that we allow in the tax abatements will be a small price to pay for a safer community. The Valero Texas City Refinery is the only plant to carry the VPP certification in Texas City at this time.

DOT Stuff

PHMSA Final Rule on Infectious Substances HazMat Harmonization with UN Recommendations

June 2, 2006 - DoT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has revised its transportation requirements for infectious substances, including regulated medical waste, to adopt new classification criteria, new exceptions, and packaging and hazard communication requirements consistent with revised international standards and to clarify existing requirements to promote compliance.

These revisions will ensure an acceptable level of safety for the transportation of infectious substances and facilitate domestic and international transportation.

The final rule is effective October 1, 2006. Voluntary compliance is authorized 30 days following publication of the

final rule.

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/06-4992.htm>

PHMS Final Rule on UN Cylinders

June 12, 2006 - The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMS) has issued a final rule amending the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR) to adopt standards for the design, construction, maintenance and use of cylinders and multiple-element gas containers based on the standards contained in the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.

The effective date is September 11, 2006, and voluntary compliance date June 12, 2006, subject to compliance with subsequent changes.

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/06-5182.htm>

Reports on Asbestos Danger in Gulf Cleanup

The full article is available at <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/14696459.htm>. The Beloxi-based paper reports on employee view of efforts to protect workers from asbestos in Gulf cleanup efforts.

Asbestos Danger – Contractors Ignoring Safety Rules

By MIKE KELLER

The health of laborers and the public are at risk because companies are skirting asbestos-handling laws while regulators look the other way, say workers engaged in the Coast's cleanup.

Current employees of contractors spoke to the Sun Herald. They refused to use their names for fear of retaliation or dismissal.

All said they had been trained and certified in proper asbestos-abatement techniques with a combined total of more than 15 years in the business.

All worked for different companies operating at different points of structural inspection, demolition and debris removal.

The violations they reported have come together to create what they said is a tempest of long-term health danger, one that neither the public nor workers even know that they need to take shelter from....

What the law says

Federal worker safety laws explicitly say that structures built before 1981 should be assumed to contain asbestos:

"Employers and building owners are required to treat installed (thermal insulation) and sprayed on and troweled-on surfacing materials as (asbestos-containing material) in buildings constructed no later than 1980 for purposes of this standard." - U.S. Dept. of Labor Code 1910.1001(j)(1)

DHS Issues Final Rule Giving Liability Protections for Quality Anti-Terrorism Technology

June 8, 2006 - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has issued a final rule implementing requirements of the Homeland Security Act of 2002--the Support Anti-terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act of 2002 giving incentives for the development and deployment of anti-terrorism technologies by providing liability protections for providers of "qualified anti-terrorism technologies."

The final rule is effective July 10, 2006.

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/06-5223.htm>

CSB Reports on 2004 Houston Explosion

Final Report from U.S. Chemical Safety Board on 2004 Explosion Calls on Houston to Enact Stricter Pressure Vessel Regulations

Houston, Texas, June 6, 2006 - In its final investigation report on a December 2004 chemical plant explosion in southwest Houston, the U.S.

Chemical Safety Board (CSB) today called on the city to adopt new safety regulations governing the construction and modification of pressure vessels - industrial process and storage containers that hold pressurized gases or liquids.

The case study report issued at a news conference this morning describes the violent explosion of a 50,000-pound steel pressure vessel on the evening of December 3, 2004, at the Marcus Oil and Chemical facility on Minetta Street in southwest Houston.

The explosion was felt over a wide area in Houston and ignited a fire that burned for seven hours. Three Houston firefighters were slightly injured during the response to the blaze. Several residents sustained cuts from flying glass, and steel fragments from the explosion were thrown up to a quarter-mile from the plant. Building and car windows were shattered, and nearby buildings experienced significant structural and interior damage.

The Marcus Oil facility, which was established in 1987, refines polyethylene waxes for industrial use. The crude waxes, which are obtained as a byproduct from the petrochemical industry, contain flammable hydrocarbons such as hexane. At Marcus Oil, the waxes are processed and purified inside a variety of steel process vessels. The vessel that exploded was a horizontal tank 12 feet in diameter, 50 feet long, and operated at a pressure of approximately 67 pounds per square inch.

CSB investigators determined that the failed vessel, known as Tank No. 7, had been modified by Marcus Oil to install internal heating coils, as were several other pressure vessels at the facility.

Following installation of the coils, each vessel was resealed by welding a steel plate over the two-foot diameter temporary opening. The repair welds did not meet accepted industry

quality standards for pressure vessels. Marcus Oil did not use a qualified welder or proper welding procedure to reseat the vessels and did not pressure-test the vessels after the welding was completed.

On the evening of December 3, the repair weld on Tank No. 7 failed under pressure, ejecting molten wax and flammable hydrocarbons. Marcus Oil used air instead of nitrogen to boost the pressure of the vessel, and the oxygen inside the tank allowed the ignition of the flammable material.

The material was likely ignited by sparks from the metal fragments. The fire spread back into the damaged tank causing a violent explosion, which propelled the 25-ton vessel more than 150 feet, where it came to rest against a warehouse on an adjacent property. CSB investigators later found a variety of large metal fragments in the surrounding community, including a 120-pound steel plate located in a field 900 feet away.

Lead Investigator John Vorderbrueggen said, "Marcus Oil could not provide our team with any documentation concerning the design, construction, or safe operating pressure of the vessels. The CSB estimated that the defective welds had decreased the strength of the vessels by more than 75%. It is likely that the welds were further weakened by metal fatigue from hundreds of operating cycles over many years. The weld on Tank #7 finally failed catastrophically during a routine production run."

Mr. Vorderbrueggen noted that substantial amounts of documentary and physical evidence were lost the Saturday morning immediately following the incident when the city demolished the fire-damaged building where Marcus Oil records were stored. CSB investigators from Washington, DC, arrived at the scene later that day.

The CSB report pointed out that Texas is one of 11 states that have not adopted national safety standards for pressure vessels. First developed in 1915, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code provides rules for pressure vessel design, fabrication, weld procedures, welder qualifications, and pressure testing. In addition, the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors has established rules for pressure vessel repairs and alterations, the National Board Inspection Code.

However, Texas is one of 17 states that do not require adherence to the National Board Inspection Code. The code requires alterations to pressure vessels to be inspected, tested, certified, and stamped.

"If the provisions of internationally recognized pressure vessel safety codes had been required and enforced, this accident would almost certainly not have occurred," CSB Board Member John S. Bresland said. "Pressure vessels potentially contain huge amounts of stored energy, and if they fail they can pose a grave danger to lives and property, as clearly demonstrated by the accident at Marcus Oil. The presence of unregulated, uninspected, and improperly maintained pressure vessels within an urban area like Houston is a serious concern."

The Board called on the City of Houston to expand the current building ordinance to require mandatory compliance with both the ASME Code for all new pressure vessels and the National

Board Inspection Code for all pressure vessel repairs and alterations. The Board separately recommended that Marcus Oil repair all modified pressure vessels to conform to the National Board Inspection Code requirements, install relief devices on all pressure vessels, and avoid the contamination of its nitrogen supply with air to prevent fires.

The case study report and accompanying safety recommendations have been posted to the agency's website, www.csb.gov.

CSB Reports on 2004 Praxair Explosions

One Year after Gas Cylinder Fire and Explosions at Praxair St. Louis, CSB Issues Safety Bulletin Focusing on Pressure-Relief Valve Standards and Good Safety Practices

Washington, DC, June 15, 2006 - The U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) today issued a safety bulletin following the agency's investigation into the June 24, 2005, fire and explosions that swept through the Praxair Distribution, Inc., gas cylinder filling and distribution center in St. Louis, Missouri. The accident occurred when gas released by a pressure relief valve on a propylene cylinder ignited.

The Safety Bulletin, entitled "Dangers of Propylene Cylinders in High

Temperatures: Fire at Praxair St. Louis," includes key findings, best practices for cylinder storage, and safety recommendations.

In addition, the CSB has released a Safety Video on the incident, which includes a computer animation depicting the gas release, as well as video of the initial release and fire taken by a Praxair security camera. The video features comments by CSB investigators and Chairman Carolyn W. Merritt.

This safety video may be viewed and obtained by filling out an online form of request at www.csb.gov.

The bulletin notes that as a result of the fire, dozens of exploding cylinders were launched into the surrounding community and struck nearby homes, buildings, and cars, causing extensive damage and several small fires. Workers and customers quickly evacuated the facility after a worker sounded the alarm at the plant. Fortunately, residents escaped injury from the falling fragments.

CSB investigators noted the accident occurred on a hot summer day with a high temperature of 97 degrees F in St. Louis. At Praxair, cylinders were stored in the open on asphalt, which radiated heat from the direct sunlight, raising the temperatures and pressure of the gas inside the cylinders. At approximately 3:20 p.m., a propylene cylinder pressure relief valve began venting. CSB investigators believe static electricity, created by escaping vapor and liquid, most likely ignited the leaking propylene.

Praxair security camera video shows the initial fire spreading quickly to other cylinders. Exploding cylinders - mostly acetylene - flew up to 800 feet away, damaged property, and started fires in the community. The fire could not be extinguished until most of the flammable gas cylinders were

expended. An estimated 8,000 cylinders were destroyed in the fire, which took five hours to control.

The investigation determined that the pressure relief set points, specified in industry standards, are too low for propylene and may allow the gas to begin venting during hot weather - well below the pressures that could damage the cylinders. Not only are the specified set points too low for propylene, the CSB found some valves begin releasing gas even before the pressure reaches the set point. Each time a pressure relief valve opens, its performance deteriorates - making it more likely to vent gas at too low a pressure in the future.

CSB lead investigator Robert Hall said, "The key lesson learned in our investigation is that the combination of high ambient temperatures and relief valves that open at too low a pressure increase the risk of catastrophic fires at these facilities."

The CSB bulletin lists three similar fires at gas repackaging facilities that were reported to be caused by leaking propylene containers since 1997.

Fires occurred at another Praxair facility in Fresno, California just a month after the St. Louis accident; an Airgas facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and an Air Liquide facility in Phoenix, Arizona.

Board Chairman Carolyn W. Merritt said, "The fire at Praxair was serious and not the only one that has occurred at compressed gas facilities. The accidents show the need for companies to follow best practices for outdoor cylinder storage and fire protection. We hope the industry takes notice with the coming of summer and high ambient temperatures in cylinder storage yards."

The CSB Safety Bulletin lists several best practices for cylinder storage at gas repackaging facilities, including fire protection systems to cool cylinders and limit the spreading of fires, adding barriers to contain exploding propylene cylinders within the facility, and gas detection systems that can sound alarms and activate fire mitigation systems.

The Board recommended that the Compressed Gas Association (CGA) revise its standards for propylene relief valves to provide a greater margin of safety and improved reliability.

GAO Stuff

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Coordination between FEMA and the Red Cross Should Be Improved for the 2006 Hurricane Season. GAO-06-712, June 8 <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-712>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d06712high.pdf>

Expedited Assistance for Victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: FEMA's Control Weaknesses Exposed the Government to Significant Fraud and Abuse. GAO-06-655, June 16. <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-655> Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d06655high.pdf>

Environmental Liabilities: Hardrock Mining Cleanup Obligations, statement for the record by John B. Stephenson, director, natural resources and environment, before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. GAO-06-884T, June 14. <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-884T>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d06884thigh.pdf>

Improvement Continues in DOD's Reporting on Sustainable Ranges but Additional Time Is Needed to Fully Implement Key Initiatives. GAO-06-725R, June 20. <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-725R>

Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Preliminary Observations on Its Process to Oversee the Safe Operation of Nuclear Power Plants, by James E. Wells, Jr., director, natural resources and environment, before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Committee on Energy and Commerce. GAO-06-888T, June 19.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-888T>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d06888thigh.pdf>

A Tentative Date has been set for our **Boiler Safety 1-day Seminar** to be held here in Lubbock on **October 10, 2006**. Keep this date open and tell your friends and colleagues of this great training opportunity right here in Lubbock.
More Information to come.

Mark your calendars now for our upcoming ASSE meetings:

- August 15th, 2006
- September 19th, 2006
- October 17th, 2006
- November 21st, 2006
- December 19th - **Family Christmas Party** at the Putt-Putt Fun Center, 5110 29th Drive (if it's snowing we'll be inside)
- January 16th, 2007
- February 20th, 2007
- March 20th, 2007
- April 17th, 2007
- May 15th, 2007
- June 19th, 2007

The South Plains Chapter regular monthly meetings are at:

River Smiths Chicken and Catfish at 5th and Q in Lubbock on the Third Tuesday of each month beginning at 6:00 p.m. for Dinner/Networking and 6:30 p.m. for the meeting.