

SHELL CHEMICAL COMPANY

JHB
743.

TO HOUSTON PLANT - MANAGER

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

SH-1674

DATE AUGUST 6, 1971

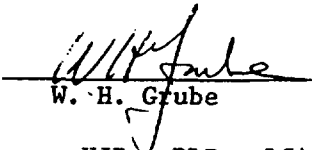
FROM MANAGER - E DEPARTMENT -
HOUSTON PLANTSUBJECT SMALL FIRE AT EP COMPRESSOR
AREA PIPE MODIFICATIONS

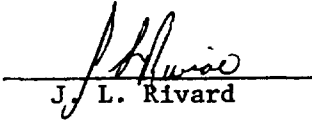
A small fire occurred near the EP Compressor Area at approximately 5:20 p.m., Tuesday, August 3, 1971. The fire was quickly extinguished by operating personnel, without injury or damage to equipment. After taking proper corrective measures, the construction hot work continued. The fire alarm was not sounded.

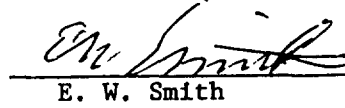
The fire occurred at a closed block valve, when process EP gases (leaking back through two closed block valves, a closed control valve, and a check valve) were ignited by sparks from a welding operation in progress ca. 20 feet overhead. The closed valve from which the gases were escaping was "open"; (i. e., not blind flanged), awaiting completion of the overhead "hot work," for installation of a spool to connect the valve with the tie-in being provided overhead. A safety permit had been issued. A firewatch had been provided. An asbestos blanket had been rigged to contain the sparks from the overhead hot work.

Since all required safety practices had been observed, it is concluded that the fire occurred due to inadequate implementation of the safety practices. Conclusions and recommendations follow:

- (1) Block valves (even multiple block valves) must never be relied upon when in the potential area of ignition. The open block valve was blind-flanged after the fire. Due to this valve's location in the probable path of potential sparks from the overhead hot work, it should have been blinded prior to issuing the safety permit.
- (2) Asbestos spark shields should be constructed adequately to contain any sparks.
- (3) The firewatch, or any supervisor (operations, maintenance, engineering, or contractor) should shut down a job if sparks are not being contained as intended. (This does not mean that all jobs require containment of sparks via blanket; however, when containment has been specified, it should be effective).


W. H. Grube


J. L. Rivard


E. W. Smith

cc: HJB RLB LSA RWH JGM RVM EWS RPS JLR JLS CAB RLG

GRH AJMc Fire & Safety Inspectors Operating Dept. Mgrs. File Chron

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