

## So what have we learned?

It's been just over a year since the horrific death of UCLA research assistant Sheharbano Sangji in a laboratory accident. What's happened since then?

On the surface, one might be tempted to say that very little has changed in the year, but we should probably look deeper. Recognizing that the winds of change are more like a Midwestern afternoon breeze rather than a Gulf-coast Category-4 hurricane, plenty of small but significant things have happened since this time last year. Let me highlight just a few:

- **The Reactives Workshop** sponsored by the Division has trained over 300 safety professionals on the necessary risk management concepts associated with using reactive materials on a laboratory and larger scale. This excellent workshop is now in the Division's regular line-up and will be for some time. I encourage everyone who can attend the San Fran-

cisco and Boston National meetings to take an extra day to attend the workshop. Even if you are an experienced safety professional or synthesis chemist you will walk away from this training with a much deeper appreciation of the risk management concepts that are unique to reactive chemistry work. I am told that it will be offered at regional meetings if enough interest is generated.

- **The ACS Committee on Chemical Safety** in conjunction with Division Leadership has brought the issue of Principal Investigator accountability to the Society at the Council level.
- **Numerous colleges, university and research institutions** have audited their safety programs from top to bottom and as a result have changed the way they do business – especially with reactive chemicals such as requiring Nomex labcoats and gloves. Certainly, general safety awareness has been increased as a direct result of the Sangji accident.
- **Through the DivChas-L Listserv, Safety Listserv and C&E News**, awareness of the inherent hazards associated with reactive chemistry has been heightened, especially early

last year when the story originally broke.

I am generally pleased at the positive steps that have been taken since Ms. Sangji's death.

Evidently, there is one thing that we haven't learned yet: how to muster the requisite moral courage necessary to hold academic front-line supervisors accountable for worker safety. As far as I can tell, *nothing* has been done to hold her supervisor accountable for the accident. The inaction on the part of UCLA management is reprehensible.

I believe that we have an obligation to insure that Ms. Sangji's death is not a meaningless statistic or a sad chapter in chemical safety. We will continue to press for information and front-line supervision accountability. The *Journal* will keep on top of any developments regarding Ms. Sangji's death.



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