

EO INCIDENT
LAKE CHARLES
CHEMICAL PLANT

APRIL 1990

VPA 000007701

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WCAE OF HOMES'



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Charles American Press

CTIONS LAKE CHARLES, LA., FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 1990 NUMBER 32,400 35 CENTS

es up on tax hike plan

Buddy Roemer personal income tax package. The administration also is having problems with a proposed hazardous waste tax and an increase in the tax on whisky. Rep. Raymond Laborde, D-Marksville, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said he's still trying to iron out problems in connection with those two taxes. The sticking point on the hazardous waste tax are definitions for dry and wet waste. Now, the state taxes wastes by dry weight and collects \$8 million a year. The proposal is to increase the tax per ton and use wet weight to bring in about \$53 million.

City moves to take over water company

By HECTOR SAN MIGUEL
 American Press Staff Writer
 In a move to take over the Greater Lake Charles Water Co., Mayor James Sudduth gave notice Thursday to its board of directors that the city has demanded the deed to its assets from trustee banks.

improvements for the water system under the "pay-as-you-go" program set up in December 1986. At that time, Sudduth said, an additional 45 percent increase was placed "on the backs of each and every water user" in

the city. Since then, he said, the water company has accumulated \$5 million in a fund for renewal.

Please see CITY Page 3

U.S., Soviets agree on new trade agreement

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and the Soviet Union reached basic agreement Thursday on an economic pact that would normalize trade relations between the two superpowers for the first time in nearly a half century, a senior U.S.

Last year, trade between the countries totaled \$5 billion. U.S. export sales, which totaled \$4.3 billion, reflected primarily grain shipments. Soviet sales in this country, totaling \$703 million, included petroleum and consumer items such as vodka and



Returns home

Robert Polhill acknowledges the crowd as he arrives at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Thursday after 39 months as a hostage in Lebanon. Story on Page 21.

Associated Press Photo

Vista emergency measures called off

By KERRY JAMISON
American Press Staff Writer

WESTLAKE — Emergency measures taken by the Vista Chemical Company and Westlake police, following the discovery of a contaminated chemical tank, were called off at 5 p.m. Thursday by Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon.

The contamination of Vista's only ethylene oxide holding tank was discovered during a routine sampling of the chemical at 2 p.m. Wednesday by Vista

employees.

"Our preliminary investigation points to a water leak in the internal cooling coil . . . as the cause of the water contamination," said plant manager John Friend. "We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident."

Ethylene oxide is used in the manufacture of household cleansers, hair shampoo and radiator fluid. The processing of this chemical is only one of eight different operations at the

plant.

Friend said the temperature of the volatile chemical is stabilized in its holding tank by internal coils that circulate refrigerated water. Approximately 11,500 gallons of the chemical were contaminated by a slight rupture in the cooling coils. The estimated cost of the material was \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Authorities at the plant decided that rather than dumping the chemical in a tailing pond and releasing inflammable gas, the best method of dealing with

the chemical would be to continue processing it until the tank was empty.

During the emergency, streets around the Vista plant were blocked and some plant employees and school children stayed home. Local businesses were closed.

Everyone agrees the threat was very real.

"At room temperature ethylene oxide emits a highly explosive gas," said Mark Delaney,

Please see VISTA Page 5

Cheney wants to trim defense budget

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Dick Cheney on Thursday called for slashing Pentagon plans for the B-2 stealth bomber and other sophisticated aircraft, citing a diminishing Soviet threat.

Cheney, pressed by congressional Democrats to cut military spending in response to rapid changes in Europe, testified his blueprint would trim \$2.4 billion from President Bush's \$307 billion defense budget for 1991 and would save \$34.8 billion through 1997.

In addition to cutting the proposed number of B-2 bombers from 132 to 75, Cheney said he intends to cut planned purchases of the C-17 long-range transport plane and the Navy's A-12 attack aircraft,

and to delay purchases of the Air Force's Advanced Tactical Aircraft and the Advanced Tactical Fighter.

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., commended Cheney for "coming to grips with some things he clearly needs to come to grips with" but said he didn't go far enough.

Citing analysts' testimony one day earlier on the internal problems in the Soviet military as well as U.S. intelligence reports predicting instability of the broader Soviet economy, Aspin said Cheney's plan "is based on an unrealistically pessimistic view of the Soviet threat."

The Democratic-controlled House is al-

ready debating a fiscal 1991 budget that would make significant cuts in proposed Pentagon spending. The Senate is working on its own version.

Cheney told the House committee, "Soviet military capability will continue to be robust but we can in fact afford to slow down the pace of developing and fielding the next generation of aircraft."

He said NATO faces "fewer enemy aircraft and a reduced ground threat" as a result of the dramatic changes sweeping Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The defense secretary said that although the Soviet Union has consistently found a way to upgrade its military despite economic woes, "we expect the overall performance of their economy to have an impact on what they're able to build and deploy by the way of sophisticated new weapons systems."

He predicted a slip in the years in which the new systems will be deployed.

Cheney said his proposed cutback would lower the projected cost of the B-2 program from \$75.4 billion to \$61.1 billion. But he said building fewer planes would drive up the cost of a single plane from about \$530 million to more than \$800 mil-

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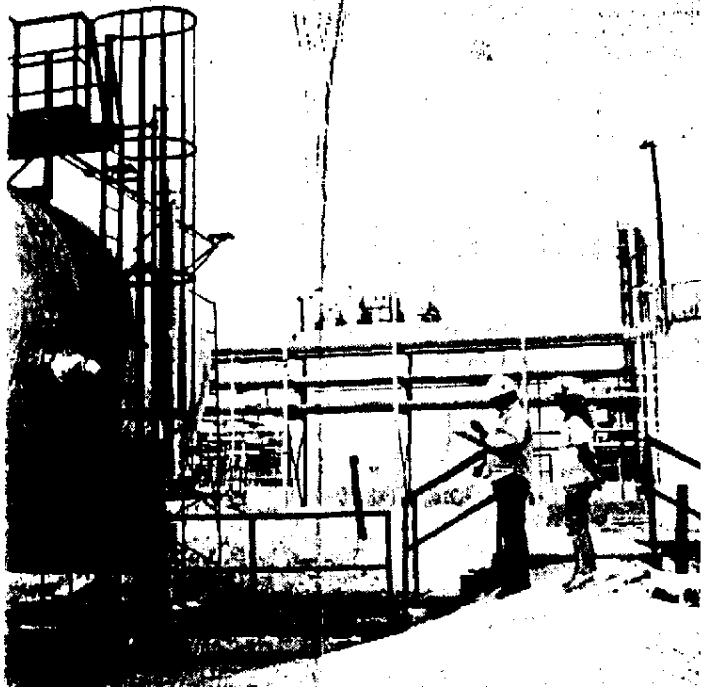
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VPA 000007704



ators Irene McGuire and Kenneth Miller monitor the ethylene Oxide storage tank that was contaminated at the plant. The emergency cordon around the plant. The emergency corded at 5 p.m. Thursday.

Vista

Continued from Page 1

assistant professor of chemistry at McNeese State University. "In the right concentration it is highly irritating to the eyes and can cause pulmonary edema (swelling of the lung tissues) when inhaled."

Friend said the situation at the plant, though critical, had been constantly monitored by instruments and processing sys-

tems that were already in place. "We kept a close eye on the temperature," said Vista spokesman Bob Miller. "If it had started to go up we would have had plenty of time to divert the ethylene oxide into a pond."

Dixon congratulated Vista on reporting the problem immediately to local civic authorities rather than trying to solve the problem in secrecy.

A Community Awareness and

Response System was also in place in Westlake in which the Calcasieu Sheriff's Department, the Civil Defense and several off-duty policemen helped out.

Jim Herford, Westlake chief of police, said the incident cost the city \$1,000 to \$2,000 in overtime man-hours, a cost Friend said the company would discuss a positive response to.

Westlake schools and businesses will be open today.

Clark College holds graduation

Clark College School of Business, Electronics, Health Care and Security of Lake Charles held graduation ceremonies at the Civic Center with Bill Peterson, assistant basketball coach at McNeese State University as guest speaker.

Receiving diplomas were:

School of Business: Administrative accounting microcomputer, Harold Knowlton, Carl Mcaux; Bookkeeping, Naomi Pelouquin; Computer information processing, Jeanette Chakrabar-

ti, Tim Landry, Angela Russell; Intensive business studies, Sharon Mills, Paulette Wiley; Office receptionist, Linda Jo Kenyon, Tina Trahan; Secretarial science, Vanessa Boudreaux, Theresa Breaux, Denise Dickey, Tiffanie Hoffpauir, Roxanne Johnson, Brunella Kay McNeal, Patricia Simien, Teresita Strauss, Tara Stutes.

School of Electronics: Electric technology, Lozenia Antoine, Kenneth Sittig, Tony Toro.

School of Health Care: Nursing assistant, Michelle Alfred, Pamalia Gallow, Jean Jessup, Adetha Levi, Charlotte Maylen, Elizabeth Miller, Annette Piccard, Dedria Pitre, Delores Prejean, Valerie Thomas, Charlene Tookes.

Private Security Training: Angela Challow, Aubrey Cloud, James Comeaux, Craig Delcoudet, Sean Ezell, Sharon Hollier, Betty LaFleur, Deanna Rogers, Timothy Thomas.

BY OUR BEAUTIFUL WORLD!

The

FOURDAY

Southwest Daily News

A Voice For Progress

VPA 000007705

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Sulphur is Tough On Drugs

Friday, April 27, 1990 Copyright 1990 Two Sections



Jury appointed Marilyn Vaughn

Mrs. Marilyn Vaughn was appointed Thursday to replace her husband, John Vaughn, as District 15 representative on the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury.

Jurors quickly gave unanimous approval to the suggestion by Jury President Louis P. "Neg" Beglis, like the Vaughns, a Sulphur resident.

Beglis opened a brief special meeting by telling his somber colleagues, "It is with deep emotion and regret that I make this report", then called on Assistant District Attorney Terry Manuel to explain that Vaughn, recuperating in a Houston clinic from severe head injuries suffered in a Jan. 18 auto accident, no longer is eligible to hold his jury position.

The ineligibility resulted from a Judgement of Incompetence, obtained April 16 by Mrs. Vaughn, to give her the needed authority to operate the family's real estate business.

"I urge and recommend that Mrs. Marilyn Vaughn be

appointed to replace her husband, John Vaughn, as District 15 representative on the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury.

The jury president, Louis P. "Neg" Beglis, like the Vaughns, a Sulphur resident.

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Police Jury

opping point

Stopping point

The sight of roadblocks, manned by Westlake City Police, fire department personnel and Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's deputies, was a familiar one around Westlake through Wednesday night and most of Thursday. The barricades were set up to keep non-essential traffic away from the

Vista Chemical Company complex while a potentially-dangerous chemical was drained from a tank. Here, Westlake police halt a tanker headed into the industrial complex along Sulphur Avenue.

Vista, Westlake return to normal

Vista Chemical Company and the City of Westlake began resuming normal activities late Thursday, after Vista officials announced a potentially-dangerous chemical tank had been emptied.

Vista Manager John Friend announced an "all clear" at a late-afternoon press conference at Westlake City Hall, ending a tense 24-hour alert which began at the plant Wednesday afternoon.

"I regret the incident happened", said Friend, a comment which may qualify as the understatement of the year.

"We've put together a team that has started an investigation of the cause of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again," added

Friend. "We're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant".

Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon joined Friend in a deep sigh of relief. All available city police, fire personnel and other employees, bolstered by a number of Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's deputies, were mobilized to virtually seal off a wide area surrounding the Vista plant.

Dixon had special praise for the media, particularly television reports during the tense night and day. "Television helped tremendously by staying on the air all night to keep people informed of the situation" the mayor said.

The alert began shortly after 4

p.m. Wednesday evening when plant officials noted a leak in a cooling coil inside a 25,000 gallon storage tank containing 11,000 gallons of ethylene oxide. Had sufficient water mixed with the chemical, a reaction could have occurred, with the potential of an explosion.

"The danger was serious", Friend admitted.

Vista employees maintained a vigil at the tank throughout Wednesday night and Thursday, monitoring temperatures to see that a critical point was not reached. Normal plant manufacturing procedures were used to empty the tank.

Late Thursday, Vista completed processing of the water-contaminated chemicals

from the tank, and roadblocks around the plant were removed.

Friend said cooperation of city employees, its police and fire departments, and the assistance of the Sheriff's Department and Civil Defense, had key roles in the success of the situation.

"The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts", said Friend. "Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately".

Classes were suspended Thursday at Westwood, Western Heights and Mossville elementary schools, Arnett Middle

See Vista Page 7B

Westlake pastor to become one of three new monsignors



torium. The convocation will mark the tenth anniversary of the diocese.

Magr. Melancon, a native of Plattenville, has been pastor of St. John Bosco Parish since 1983. Last year, he celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

After assignments as an associate pastor in Opelousas, and St. Henry and Our Lady Queen of Heaven parishes in Lake Char-

terry, the diocesan school board, diocesan boundaries commission and the clergy personnel board, and directed the permanent diaconate program.

Presently, he is serving his second term as president of the Priests' Senate of the Diocese. He has served as chaplain of the Serra Club of Lake Charles and as Catholic chaplain for the Calcasieu Area Council of the Boy



... Begun on ... plain 118 years ago

a little-leaf linden for Britain's King George VI, and Herbert Hoover and Dwight Eisenhower, both Midwesterners, left their arboreal legacy in oaks. Bush's grandchildren now swing on Ike's sturdy tree.

Bush, who wants to plant a tree in every state, last April personally turned the dirt for an offspring of the Adams elm on the grounds of the North Dakota capitol in Bismarck.

But before the presidential spade tapped down the roots, horticulturalists had to take emergency action against gypsy moth larvae that had taken a free ride from Washington amid the 12-foot sapling's branches.

The president's North Dakota tree is now thriving, according to S.F. "Buckshot" Hoffner, executive director of the North Dakota Centennial Commission. The elms Bush planted in South Dakota and Montana for those states' centennials last year are also budding.

On April 3, Bush planted another elm in Indianapolis and dedicated it to the comatose Ryan White, the teen-ager with AIDS who died five days later.

But Bush is not tackling his goal single-handedly. In his 1990 budget, he asked Congress for \$176 million to plant 1 billion trees. He has called on fellow citizens to plant 10 billion trees by the beginning of the century. In time, he said, those trees would annually absorb 13 million tons of carbon dioxide, 6 percent of nationwide emissions.

Global ReLeaf, a project of the American Forestry Association, plans to plant 100 million trees in the United States by 1992. A

private U.S.-Soviet venture plans to plant fruit trees along the coast of Nicaragua.

Scrambling to get on the bandwagon, corporations are lining up to help the U.S. Forest Service with its National Tree Planting Initiative.

Texaco, for one, has pledged \$1 million to nurture new woods being planted this year by volunteers in Houston, New Orleans and Denver.

Scientists say woodlands restoration comes none too soon. Over centuries, agriculture has done in nearly half of the Earth's original forestland. Every year, tropical rain forests the size of Tennessee disappear under the machete and the bulldozer. Experts say football field-sized stands of trees are mowed down somewhere in the world every 3 seconds.

Arbor Day, as with most great causes, began as one person's vision and became an official holiday long before ecology was a buzz word.

In 1854, Julius Sterling Morton, son of a wealthy New York merchant, left the cultured East with his bride a few hours and headed for the Nebraska Territory. They settled on a treeless 160-acre homestead outside Nebraska City, 40 miles south of Omaha on the Missouri River.

Just 3 percent of the vast Territory was wooded. Fierce prairie fires and roaming buffalo made trees so scarce they became landmarks, such as "travel two days until you get to the tree." It is claimed that Lone Tree, Neb., was named for a single huge cottonwood on the Ox Bow Trail.

Vista

From Page 1A

School and Westlake High School. Construction work also was halted at Vista, and traffic to and from Vista and the adjacent Conoco plant was curtailed during the emergency.

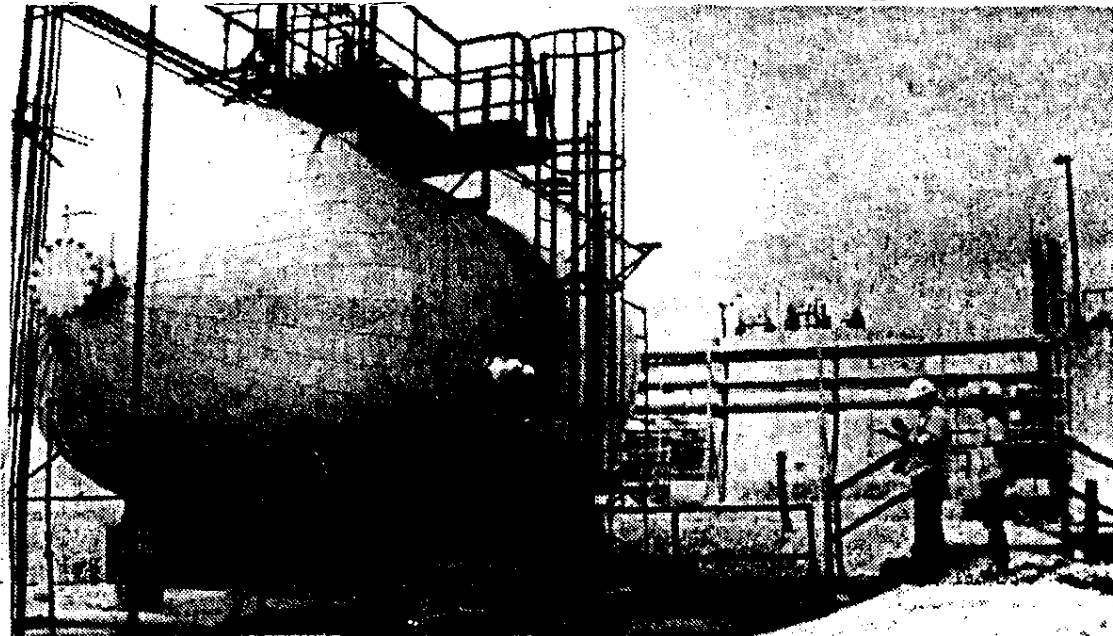
Friend reported that Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control

this type of emergency.

"We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry. The local emergency response officials and Vista officials feel

the system worked very well," Friend noted.

According to Friend, preliminary investigations point to a water leak in the internal cooling coil in the ethylene oxide tank as the cause of the water contamination.



Keeping watch

Vista Chemical Company operators Kenneth Miller and Irene McGuire maintain a vigil at an ethylene oxide tank which kept plant officials and the nearby city of Westlake on a 24-hour alert. Miller and

McGuire were members of a team which kept a careful check on the internal temperature of the tank to be certain no dangerous reaction was taking place. (Vista Chemical photo)

Jury

From Page 1A

Lockhart agreed.

"I find it discouraging to watch the news and see Louisiana is first in so many things, none of which you can be proud of," he said. "I want to see us make some of these people do what they're supposed to do."

Bell City member Darrell Deruven had a sharp suggestion

Jury President Louis P. "Neg" Beglis of Sulphur and DeQuincy's Ray Coltrin were two who weren't fully convinced.

"I think we should invite the plant manager to be here next week (at the jury's regular meeting) and see if he has any defense," said Beglis. "They may have plans to improve, because a lot of these plants have problems."

despite changes of ownership. "I'm not sure we want to set this precedent," because, probably, not one of the plants west of the river could pass this test," added Coltrin. "Maybe, though, we should vote from the heart on this one."

Lake Charles juror Charles Liggio made the decisive comment. "This company has been a problem

UFA 000007707

Possible Vista emergency alerts Westlake residents

Officials of Vista Chemical and the City of Westlake were on full alert Wednesday, monitoring a potentially-dangerous tank of ethylene oxide.

Late Wednesday night, Calcasieu Parish School Superintendent Charles Oakley announced that Westlake High School, Arnett Middle School, and Westwood Heights, Westwood and Mossville elementary schools will not hold classes Thursday at the request of Mayor Dudley Dixon.

Vista officials said construction workers should not report to Vista projects Thursday morning.

The chemical, which Vista Director of Employee Relations Bob Miller said is used in making alcohol ethoxylate product, was slowly being drained from a tank containing some 12,000 gallons of the chemical.

The potential danger was from water used to cool the tank. "If ethylene oxide is mixed with water, you have the potential of a

chemical reaction and explosion," Miller explained. He said Vista personnel were monitoring temperatures of the tank, since a rise in temperature could signal a possible reaction.

Mayor Dixon said the city's emergency preparedness plan was in full operation, although at 7 p.m., the city's emergency warning system had not been needed.

"We have blocked off all roads in what might be a danger area," Dixon reported. "Only essential personnel needed at the plants are being allowed in, our fire and police departments are on standby, and we have ringed the area where evacuation might be required. We've notified the high school and Red Cross, and if there is a need, we can move immediately to evacuate anyone in danger."

Dixon and Miller agreed a long night was in store. The problem was noted by Vista workers about 4:15 p.m., and it may be late Thursday before the tank is

completely drained.

Miller said the tank, with a capacity of 25,000 gallons, was being reduced by normal manufacturing methods. "If the temperature begins to rise, we would dump the product into a pond designed for that purpose," Miller explained.

"The problem with that is that dumping it could form a vapor cloud, which could cause an explosion if it reached a heat source," Miller added.

Dixon praised Vista's handling of the emergency. "We have been talking to experts all over the country, and all agree that as long as the material is stabilized, there's no problem," the mayor said.

"We (city officials) have been into the plant, we've seen what the Vista people are doing and everyone is working well together," Dixon added. "The volume of the material in the tank is constantly decreasing, and the danger decreases, proportionately."



Planting flowers
The three and four-year-old Calcasieu-Cameron Child Development Center children celebrated Earth Day by planting a variety of flowers in front of the center. Everyone was

Upcoming events

Thursday, April 26

The third annual McNeese National Works on Paper exhibition will be held in the Abercrombie Gallery through May 1.

Police Jury
The Calcasieu Parish Police Jury will hold committee meetings at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Government Building.

Firefighter class
Word 4 District 4 Houston River

ized by the Ninety Nines Inc., Women Pilots, will meet at 4 p.m. in the Media Room in the terminal building at Lake Charles Regional Airport. Chapter leaders Dr. Sandra Leder and Deborah Ransdell invite students in grades 4-8 who are interested in learning more about the program.

Port, Elsi

Port of Lake Charles officials held a meeting to "exchange ideas" about Elsinore, Aerospace locating a airplane maintenance facility at Chennault Industrial Airport.

Bill Duke, executive director of the port, Larry DeRouen, port board president, along with

VPA 000007708

City back to normal after alert

It's business as usual in Westlake this week, and traffic down Sulpher Avenue and Houston River Road is heavy once again. The seriousness of last week's scare appears to be forgotten.

The city faced a real emergency last Wednesday evening when a water line wrapped inside a storage tank at Vista Chemical containing ethylene oxide creating the possibility of an explosion.

A citywide alert was called and city and plant officials came together and had the situation under control immediately. All available city police, fire personnel and other employees, bolstered by a number of Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's deputies, were mobilized to virtually seal off a wide area surrounding the Vista plant.

Vista Chemical Company and the City of Westlake began resuming normal activities late Thursday, after Vista officials announced a potentially-dangerous chemical tank had been emptied.

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"I regret the incident happened," said Friend. "We've put together a team that has started an investigation of the cause of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again. We're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant."

Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon joined Friend in a deep sigh of relief. Dixon had special praise for the media, particularly television reports during the tense night and day.

"Television helped tremendously by staying on the air all night to keep people informed of the situation," the mayor said. "The danger was serious," Friend admitted.

Vista employees maintained a vigil at the tank throughout Wednesday night and Thursday, monitoring temperatures to see that a critical point was not reached. Normal plant manufacturing procedures were used to empty the tank.

Late Thursday, Vista completed processing of the water-contaminated chemicals from the tank, and roadblocks around the plant were removed. Friend said cooperation of city employees, its police and fire departments, and the assistance of the Sheriff's Department and Civil Defense, had key roles in the success of the situation.

"The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts," said Friend. "Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and

See Alert, P. 2A

Alert

from P. 1A

Local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately.

Classes were suspended Thursday at Westwood, Western Heights and Moorville elementary schools, Arnett Middle School and Westlake High School. Construction work also was halted at Vista, and traffic and from Vista and the adjacent Cooce plant was curtailed during the emergency.

Friend reported that Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency.

"We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry.

The local emergency response officials and Vista officials feel the system worked very well," Friend noted.

"Our Westlake operations have had 28 years' experience in

handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident," the plant manager added. "We want to continue that record, forever."

Friend extended his thanks to the public officials of Westlake, Moorville and Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing the incident to a safe conclusion. In addition, he paid thanks to members of the media who helped keep area residents informed during the emergency.

LEPC praises Vista for emergency plan

By Craig Merglet

News correspondent

Local Emergency Planning Commission chairman Samuel Russell described the way Vista Chemical handled a potentially dangerous situation last week as a textbook example of how to deal with an emergency.

LEPC held a debriefing last Friday afternoon concerning the intrusion of water into a tank containing ethylene oxide at the Vista plant in Westlake.

Plant manager John Friend said EO can react very rapidly with water in the presence of a catalyst. The reaction may produce heat which could lead to an explosion in a closed container.

Water entered the storage unit from a leaking internal cooling coil. Impurities in the water could have acted as a catalyst, according to Friend.

Friend said the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system "works and works well. I want to thank the public officials of Westlake, Moorville and Calcasieu Parish for

their help and cooperation."

Plant operators first noticed a problem in the manufacturing process at 1 p.m. Tuesday. After discovering water in the tank, team members notified area officials through the CAER system late Wednesday afternoon.

Operators began removing the 11,500 gallons of EO in the tank through normal processing and four schools in the Westlake area were closed Thursday as the processing continued.

Vista announced the "all clear" about 5 p.m. Thursday through the CAER system.

"If the temperature had made a sustained increase, we would have notified officials to consider evacuation," Friend said. "However, the tank's condition remained stable throughout this incident."

Friend said 5 pounds of the EO were released at one point, but posed no threat to employees or nearby residents.

Vista uses EO, a liquid, to make alcoholsthoriate products used in making detergents and personal care products.

Batch-type 1412-60

Operation

every 6 is sampled at exit from

~~NVR non-volatile~~
~~Instrumental~~
~~of 51220~~

Regular Sampling

when car is unloaded
normal process
to check EO

normally
3 1/2 hrs. for
Avg. a batch

2 pm Noticed problem
continuous monitoring
of temperature
Sampling (whitehead)

tested for color, pH
hyarol, color

Time

probably later

3:30

Just 5 lbs of EO called
Superfund (DE-94 EPA)
Michigan

DC Water
Spill
Baton
Rouge

Jerry Johnson
5ish

First indication
of problem
was on
Tues p.m.

2:15 - 2:30

Emergency Resp. Team

Sr. mgr.

Paul Carrico

Jim Digger + ops. super.

David Stacey

Joe Ray

Foggy

Brent White

Jerry Johnson

~~to be~~
Sr. Procz
edge.
Dotra

3-4pm
variance
from
normal
in
cloud
point
any
no.
of

Action Items

Trying to understand ~~the~~ ~~problem~~

Looking at options

Drumming tank

Came up w/ action steps

possibilities
improper
alcohol
blend

Unusual,
but it
has
happened
from time
to time

Did
not
call
EPA

~~scribble~~

7:59 state police

8:10 DEP

8:15 LERC

paper
1095
635
688

placet
Cen. V
Cain
Avoid. no pro.

VFA 000007213

hard to get price
25¢ → 55¢/lb.
when eth 15 - 33¢/lb.
(feedstock)
ETO dangerous mat.
always's punch. elsewhere

Jack Cannon
x 3328

any body
in Europe
Ethanol broken up
in last 2 years

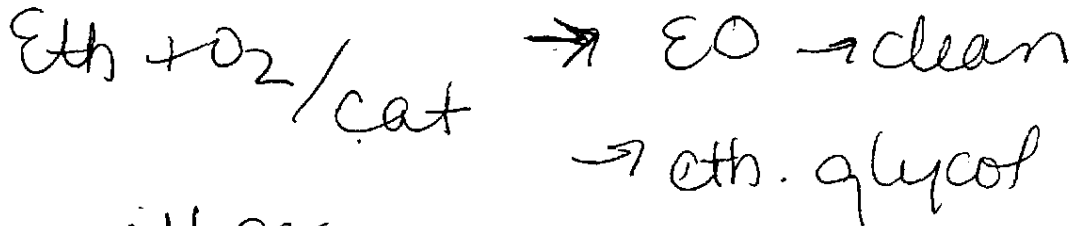
x 3330
(3833?)

RTA - records inputs
CU?

unit - eth placed > ant. frang
blow-up ~ '78
ETO related
Apt. may find out

x 3530

'76 - Calc. Chemical
1/2 w/ City Service
ETO +



eth gas
hydrocarbon with O_2 - flammable
why calc. fire occurred.

destroyed reactor out of 4
no inj. / deaths

Shut down / partners dissolved

rebuilt ran for 2 more years
replaced inst. / mod.

News Bulletin

At about 2 p.m. yesterday afternoon (April 25) Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

The contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is now approximately one-quarter full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators in Vista's ethoxylate unit are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Vista personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this could take another 12-18 hours.

If the reaction begins, operators can dump the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some could be released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has told all

non-essential Lake Charles Chemical Plant personnel to remain at home. The alcohols unit has been shut down except for one growth reactor, because the alcohols unit is located just north of the ethoxylate unit and the wind is from the south. All other units at the chemical plant are functioning normally, but product shipments may be disrupted today. Construction on the EXAM project has been halted. Both the VCM plant and the LAB plant are operating normally.

Vista is in contact with the Mayor of Westlake, the police and other emergency personnel, as well as nearby industry, and is coordinating emergency actions with them.

Both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, have been closed by the city, as a precaution. Conoco shut down its turnaround operations last night, but made the decision to restart work this morning and employees are passing through police lines. Four Westlake schools, Westwood elementary, Western Heights elementary, Westlake High, and Mossville Elementary will remain closed today. Local media has been very cooperative, maintaining coverage of the incident through the night and helping Vista communicate with its em-

ployees. The company has set up a media briefing center at the Westlake City Hall.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Other information

Q. How did the contamination occur?

A. At this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination.

Q. What are the health effects of EO?

A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.

Q. What do we use EO for?

A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.

Q. Do we manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Oxychem.

About the ethoxylate unit:

The unit was built in 1962 and has a capacity of 65 million pounds per year. EO is brought to the plant by rail car.

Provided by the Vista
Public Relations Department Ext. 3210

News Bulletin

At about 5 p.m. yesterday (April 26), Vista Lake Charles Chemical Plant (LCCP) employees completed removal of the water-contaminated ethylene oxide (EO) from its storage tank. The emergency situation is over and operations in the plant are returning to normal.

Employees are reporting to work for their usual shifts throughout the plant. Roads around the plant have been reopened and schools and local industry have returned to normal operations.

NO LONGER A MYSTERY. How the tank became contaminated is not such a mystery any longer. A team of employees was formed to investigate the causes of the contamination.

The team's preliminary work points to a water leak in the internal cooling coil in the EO tank as the cause of the water contamination.

"Steps will be taken to ensure that this never happens again," said John Friend, plant manager, LCCP.

"And," he continued, "we're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using EO in our plant."

TRACK RECORD OF SAFETY. "The Lake Charles Chemical Plant has a 28-year-long track record of

handling EO without a serious incident," Friend told a press conference yesterday. "We want to continue that record.

"Vista has instruments and process systems in place that monitor and control this type of emergency. Those systems worked during this one," Friend said.

THE CAER CONNECTION. Throughout the emergency, Vista relied on the Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) system to alert and inform local emergency response officials and the public. CAER was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry.

Additionally, the local media helped keep Vista employees informed during the incident.

OTHER INFORMATION--Q&A. The following is a list of other questions and answers prepared for yesterday's press conference.

Q. Vista is going to continue using EO?

A. Ethylene oxide, along with all the chemicals we use or make, are of great benefit to our society. For instance, EO is used to make household and industrial detergents and other cleaning products we all use every day.

But we also believe they must

be handled with care, by trained, experienced people. That's how we expect to continue to operate our business.

Q. Who's going to pay for the city and parish employees' overtime and other expenses incurred helping Vista during the emergency?

A. Vista is willing to work with city, parish and state response organizations to ensure that the extraordinary costs are covered. We want to make sure the taxpayers don't have to pay for them.

Q. Does Vista manufacture EO?

A. No, we purchase it from Oxychem.

Provided by the Vista Chemical Company
Public Relations Department
Questions? Contact Mike Reynolds,
713/588-3210

4

EO emergency-MSR speech

- Lake Charles Ethylene Oxide Emergency
 - ☰ 4/25 Wednesday
 - John Friend called at 5 p.m. April 25
 - He asked for two things:
 - a P.R. person at the plant ASAP
 - Help writing a statement for news media
 - CAER system was alerted
 - Situation required road closings
 - Media center needed outside plant
 - ☰ 4/25 Wednesday--5-6 p.m.
 - Called for environmental backup
 - Information on EO
 - Tried to locate Bozman
 - MSR, GEW, MAS, DLT still at office
 - Called back Loughlin for secretarial support
 - Began packing
 - Bozman's computer system and printer
 - Still camera and film
 - Press release--office materials, phone lists
 - Vista PR emergency information manuals
 - Reynolds called back Friend and began getting details for first statement
 - Talked to DeBernardi, checked on execs in and out of town
 - ☰ 4/25 Wednesday--6-7 p.m.
 - Statement faxed to Friend at plant
 - Bob Miller took statement, went to set up Media center at Westlake City Hall. Gave nine interviews by midnight.
 - Grumbles arrives; he, Reynolds, Stephenson began revising statement, brainstorming questions
 - Collected more EO information
 - Thomas began searching for:
 - aerial photos
 - fact sheets on plant
 - Reached Bozman, asked her to pack, come in
 - ☰ 4/25 Wednesday-7--10:30 p.m.
 - Weis left for Lake Charles by car
 - Faxed subsequent statements to plant
 - Reynolds, Stephenson briefed Bozman
 - Thomas printed plant fact sheets
 - Bozman leaves for Lake Charles
 - Reynolds, Stephenson, Grumbles began developing answers for possible questions
 - Stephenson drafted radio announcements for Lake Charles to use for employee notification for reporting to work
 - Thomas, Loughlin left for home
 - ☰ 4/25 Wednesday--10:30-12

EO emergency-MSR speech

- After highway delay, Weis arrived at Lake Charles plant, was briefed, goes to media center
- Bozman arrived at plant, was briefed, left for media center
- With situation settling into a pattern, Reynolds, Stephenson go home
- ☰ 4/26 Thursday--11:30-7
 - Weis manned media center, giving 13 interviews, updates during the night
 - Bozman goes to hotel, returns to head media center at 7 a.m.
 - Weis notifies local radio of personal needed at plant
- ☰ 4/26 Thursday--7-Noon
 - Bozman took over at media center, Weis to hotel
 - Houston PR employees reported
 - Previous night's statement is edited, distributed to desks of key members of Houston management
 - Reynolds contacted, briefed S&T
 - Media activity picked up, Bozman completed 19 tv, radio and newspaper interviews
 - Stephenson left for Lake Charles
 - Loughlin distributed news bulletin at Houston, faxed to other plants, sales offices
 - Thomas selects aerial photos, sent out for rush processing
 - Photos hot-shotted to Lake Charles
- ☰ 4/26 Thursday--Noon-8
 - Stephenson arrived at media center, Bozman briefed her and left to escort media through police lines for video footage, take photos inside plant
 - Weis returned to Houston
 - Reynolds began drafting statement for end of emergency, reviewing with DeBernardi, McClain
 - Data developed for Friend by Reynolds, Grumbles on how EO reacts with water
 - Thomas develops information on Calcacieu Chemical
 - McClain developed answer for who'll pay for city, parish overtime
- ☰ 4/26 Thursday--Noon--8 p.m.
 - Stephenson, Miller head media center, giving updates to reporters
 - Houston PR relays statements, Q&As to Friend at plant, Stephenson at media center
 - Bozman coordinated revisions in press conference statement with Houston
 - Stephenson writes press release for press conference
 - Bozman revised and edited press release for use at press conference
 - Stephenson, Miller notify media of 5:15 press conference
- ☰ 4/26 Thursday--Noon-8
 - Bozman counsels Friend, staff on Local Emergency Planning Council meeting set for 4/27
 - Bozman coordinated Friend appearance on Live at Five
 - Friend held press conference, using last statement
 - Thomas drafts announcement for employees next morning
 - Bozman, Stephenson deliver photos to newspapers for 9 p.m. deadline

EO emergency-MSR speech

- ☰ 4/27 Friday--7-4:30 p.m.
 - Stephenson, Bozman meet with plant mgmt. to continue discussion of LEPC meeting
 - Stephenson and Bozman meet with shift supv., engineers to pin down facts, times
 - Stephenson and Bozman prepare 20-minute speech, timetable for meeting
 - Stephenson, Bozman meet with Friend to discuss plans
 - Stephenson, Bozman prepare press kits
 - Bozman handles media at LEPC meeting; Friend gives speech
 - Thomas issues followup employee news bulletin
 - Stephenson, Bozman return to Houston
- ☰ What we learned
 - What worked
 - Two-person PR team, coordinated with Houston
 - Miller, Friend as spokespersons
 - File photos
 - Taking pictures for the media
 - Media center at city hall
 - Grumbles' accessibility
 - Computer, printer on scene
 - Getting feedback from shift supervisors, engineers
- ☰ What Vista needs for the future
 - Close working relationships with emergency personnel near all our plants
 - Detailed, communicated emergency plans for all plants, including:
 - employees at site
 - emergency personnel
 - media
 - the surrounding community
 - Drills to practice these plans
 - A PR employee to work with other plants and their communities to gain the same type of media, official cooperation that Bozman enjoyed in Lake Charles
- ☰ What PR needs for the future
 - MSDS's, chemical data in language for the layman
 - Pagers for key employees
 - A change of clothes at the office for each employee
 - Arrangements for rapid travel to sites other than Lake Charles
 - A spare, lighter printer
 - A portable fax machine
 - 2 walkie-talkies and cellular phones
 - To take, file and maintain aerial and ground-level photos of all our facilities and surrounding areas
 - Aerial-view drawings of plants, surrounding areas
 - Ammerman training for Thomas
- ☰ What We Learned
 - What didn't work

EO emergency-MSR speech

- ▯ Slow speed getting PR to scene
- ▯ No fax at media center for first night
- ▯ MSDS couldn't be understood
- ▯ Legal didn't inform PR when they found out about incident 30 minutes earlier
- ▯ Notifying Mossville
- ▯ No news, updates to roadblock personnel
- ▯ Secretarial/clerical help was needed at media center
- ▯ Couldn't get food
- ▯ Weren't up-front about 5 lb. release
- ▯ Coordination with VCM and LAB plants

THERE ARE SEVERAL POINTS THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THIS AFTERNOON. FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM WORKS, AND WORKS VERY WELL. I WANT TO THANK THE PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF WESTLAKE, MOSSVILLE AND CALCASIEU PARISH FOR THEIR HELP AND COOPERATION IN BRINGING THIS INCIDENT TO A SAFE CONCLUSION. AND, I PARTICULARLY WANT TO THANK THE MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA WHO HAVE HELPED US KEEP PEOPLE INFORMED.

AT THIS POINT, I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU A RUN DOWN OF EVENTS AS THEY OCCURRED, ALONG WITH A BASIC DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS AND THE MATERIALS INVOLVED.

LET'S START BY DESCRIBING ETHYLENE OXIDE AND HOW WE USE IT IN OUR MANUFACTURING PROCESS.

WE PURCHASE EO AND USE IT TO MAKE ALCOHOL ETHOXYLATE PRODUCTS. WE SELL THESE PRODUCTS TO OUR CUSTOMERS FOR USE IN

MAKING HOUSEHOLD AND INDUSTRIAL DETERGENTS AND PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS LIKE SHAMPOO AND COSMETICS.

FOR BACKGROUND PURPOSES, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT EO IS A FLAMMABLE LIQUID AND EASILY IGNITED. IT HAS AN AUTO-IGNITION TEMPERATURE, IN AIR, OF (804°F) AND CAN BURN AT AS LITTLE AS 3% MIXTURE IN AIR. AS A VAPOR, IT WILL DECOMPOSE VIOLENTLY WHEN EXPOSED TO CERTAIN TEMPERATURES. SPECIFICALLY, AT 1040°F, IT WILL EXPLODE WHEN IT IS AT HIGH TEMPERATURE IN A CONTAINED ATMOSPHERE. EO IS TOXIC AND, THEREFORE, SHOULD NOT BE INHALED. OSHA EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE 1 PPM IN AN 8-HOUR EXPOSURE PERIOD AND 5 PPM IN A 15 MINUTE EXPOSURE PERIOD. SHORT-TERM EXPOSURE TO HIGH CONCENTRATIONS CAN CAUSE HEADACHE, DIZZINESS, NAUSEA AND VOMITING, DIFFICULTY IN BREATHING, AND DEPRESSION OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM. EO ALSO

IS A CANCER-SUSPECT AGENT WHEN EXPOSURE OCCURS OVER LONG PERIODS OF TIME.

WE BELIEVE OUR ACTIONS WERE PRUDENT CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES. ETHYLENE OXIDE CAN REACT VERY RAPIDLY WITH WATER IN THE PRESENCE OF A CATALYST TO FORM ETHYLENE GLYCOL, THE PRINCIPLE INGREDIENT IN AUTO ANTIFREEZE. THERE WAS A REMOTE POSSIBILITY THAT IMPURITIES IN THE WATER COULD ACT AS A CATALYST TO START THIS REACTION. THE ETHYLENE GLYCOL ITSELF CAN THEN REACT WITH THE EO TO FORM POLYETHYLENE GLYCOL, A POLYMER OR PLASTIC MATERIAL WHICH IS NONHAZARDOUS. BOTH REACTIONS PRODUCE A LOT OF HEAT. ALL THIS HEAT THEN MAKES THE REACTIONS TAKE PLACE FASTER AND FASTER AND COULD LEAD TO AN UNCONTROLLED SITUATION. IF THIS TAKES PLACE IN A CLOSED CONTAINER, AN EXPLOSION AND FIRE COULD RESULT.

WHEN EO ARRIVES AT OUR

PLANT, IT IS FIRST STORED IN OUR 25,000 GALLON STORAGE TANK. THIS IS THE FIRST STAGE OF THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS.

(SHOW EO TANK DRAWING AND EXPLAIN.)

WE BELIEVE THAT EO MUST BE HANDLED WITH CARE, BY TRAINED, EXPERIENCED PEOPLE. THAT'S HOW WE EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE OUR BUSINESS.

NOW FOR A CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS AS THEY HAPPENED EARLIER THIS WEEK.

THE OPERATIONS PERSONNEL IN OUR ETO UNIT SAMPLED A BATCH OF OUR ALCOHOL ETHOXYLATE PRODUCT LATE TUESDAY AFTERNOON. THAT BATCH SHOWED SOME VARIANCE FROM THE NORM IN A PRODUCT QUALITY PARAMETER CALLED CLOUD POINT. SEVERAL FACTORS CAN CAUSE CLOUD POINT TO VARY. THE OPERATIONS TEAM THEN BEGAN TO LOOK FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PRODUCT QUALITY PROBLEM. AS THEY ELIMINATED VARIABLES, THEY WERE ABLE TO

VPA 000007722

PINPOINT THE FACT THAT WATER WAS PRESENT IN AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT IN THE OFF-SPEC PRODUCT. BY

WEDNESDAY, THIS WAS TRACED TO WATER CONTAMINATION IN THE EO RAW MATERIAL WHICH CAME FROM A LEAKING INTERNAL COOLING COIL IN THE EO STORAGE TANK. WE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO ASSESS THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM AND EVALUATE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

A RESPONSE TEAM WAS FORMED TO ANALYZE THE SITUATION, GATHER ADDITIONAL DATA, AND IDENTIFY ALL POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

ONCE WE DETERMINED THE NATURE OF THE TANK'S CONDITION, WE SET THE CAER SYSTEM IN MOTION.

THIS BEGAN WITH CALLS TO CAER, WESTLAKE CITY OFFICIALS, OUR OTHER VISTA PLANTS IN WESTLAKE, AND CONOCO. WE ALSO SENT HOME ALL NON-ESSENTIAL VISTA PERSONNEL AND CONTRACT PERSONNEL.

WE SET UP A VISTA COMMAND CENTER AT THE PLANT'S MAIN OFFICE

AND A MEDIA CENTER AT THE WESTLAKE CITY HALL WITH THE COOPERATION OF CITY OFFICIALS.

ABOUT 5:00 PM, ALL POLICE ROAD BLOCKS WERE IN PLACE ON OLD SPANISH TRAIL AND HOUSTON RIVER ROAD. ONLY ESSENTIAL OPERATIONS EMPLOYEES OF VISTA REPORTED FOR DUTY ON THEIR REGULAR SHIFTS. CONOCO ELECTED TO SHUT DOWN THEIR MAJOR TURNAROUND WORK ON THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT SHIFT.

OUR FIRST PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC BEGAN AT ABOUT 6 PM ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25.

WE DECIDED THE BEST METHOD FOR REMOVING THE EO FROM THE TANK WAS TO PROCESS IT THROUGH THE MANUFACTURING SYSTEM. AS THIS WAS DONE, WE CONTINUALLY MONITORED THE TEMPERATURE AND PRESSURE IN THE TANK. IF THE TEMPERATURE HAD MADE A SUSTAINED INCREASE, WE WOULD HAVE NOTIFIED OFFICIALS TO CONSIDER EVACUATION WHICH WE HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED WITH THEM. IF THE TEMPERATURE

CONTINUED TO MOVE UP, WE WOULD HAVE DRAINED THE EO TO THE EMERGENCY RELIEF BASIN. THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS ACTION COULD RESULT IN A FIRE HAZARD OR EXPOSURE. HOWEVER, THE TANKS CONDITION REMAINED STABLE THROUGHOUT THIS INCIDENT AND NONE OF THESE ACTIONS WERE REQUIRED.

WE CONTINUOUSLY MONITORED THE TANK'S CONDITION AND PROVIDED UPDATES THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND THROUGH THE FOLLOWING DAY UNTIL THE INCIDENT WAS BROUGHT TO A SAFE CONCLUSION.

FREQUENT UPDATES WERE GIVEN TO LOCAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS. DURING THE NIGHT OF THE 25TH, WE MADE RADIO AND TELEVISION ANNOUNCEMENTS ADVISING OFFICE AND CONTRACT EMPLOYEES TO REMAIN AT HOME ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26. SCHOOL OFFICIALS DECIDED TO CLOSE FOUR WESTLAKE SCHOOLS UNTIL WE RETURNED TO NORMAL PLANT OPERATIONS.

BY EARLY MORNING THURSDAY,

WE HAD REMOVED OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE EO FROM THE TANK AND PROJECTED COMPLETION SOMETIME DURING THE EARLY EVENING HOURS.

THE ALL CLEAR WAS GIVEN THROUGH THE CAER SYSTEM AT 5:08 PM YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. AT 5:15 PM, WE HELD OUR FINAL PRESS BRIEFING WITH THE MAYOR OF WESTLAKE AND THE WESTLAKE POLICE CHIEF.

WE ARE HAPPY THAT THIS WAS PRECAUTIONARY IN THE END AND THAT THE CAER SYSTEM WORKED. ONCE AGAIN, THANKS TO THE MEDIA FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED.

PRESS INTERVIEWS
Vista Chemical ethylene oxide situation
Lake Charles, Louisiana
4/25-26/90

Date	Time	Media	Reporter	Spokesperson	Reason
4/25	6 p.m.	SW Daily News, Sulphur	Adams	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:10 p.m.	LC American Press	Dickey	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:15 p.m.	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Beaugois	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:25 p.m.	KVHP-TV, Ch 29, LC	Lee	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:35 p.m.	Ch 3 TV, Lafayette	Roca	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:40 p.m.	LA 99 radio, LC	Billedeaux	Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	6:45 p.m.	KYKZ radio, LC		Miller	Initial statement/phone
4/25	9 p.m.	KVHP-TV, Ch 29, LC	Lee	Miller	Update request/phone
4/25	10 p.m.	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Smith	Friend	Live update/studio
4/25	12 midn	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Beaugois	Miller	Live update/city hall
4/26	1 a.m.	KVHP-TV, Ch 29, LC	Lee	Weis	Live update/ city hall
4/26	3:40 a.m.	Ch 10 TV, Lafayette		Weis	Taped update/city hall
4/26	4:50 a.m.	LA 99 radio, LC	Billedeaux	Weis	Taped update/city hall
4/26	6 a.m.	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Beaugois	Friend	Live update/city hall
4/26	8:25 a.m.	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Beaugois	Bozman	Live update/city hall
4/26	9 a.m.	KVHP-TV, Ch 29, LC	Lee	Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	9:15 a.m.	Ch 6 TV, Beaumont	Shepard	Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	9:45 a.m.	LA 99 radio, LC	Billedeaux	Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	10 a.m.	Ch 3 TV, Lafayette		Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	10:10 a.m.	KYKZ radio, LC	Bridges	Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	10:15 a.m.	Westlake-M/B News	O'Quain	Bozman	In-depth interview
4/26	10:45 a.m.	Ch 12 TV, Beaumont	Russell	Bozman	Taped update/city hall
4/26	11:45 a.m.	Ch 10 TV, Lafayette	Arnold	Miller	Taped update/phone
4/26	12 noon	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Gray	Bozman	Live update/plant gate
4/26	12 noon	Ch 6 TV, Beaumont	Shepard	Miller	Live update/city hall
4/26	1 p.m.	KPLC-TV, Ch 7, LC	Murphy	Miller	Taped update/city hall
4/26	1:50 p.m.	SW Daily News, Sulphur	Adams	Stephenson	Update/phone
4/26	2:30 p.m.	Ch 3 TV, Lafayette	Myers	Stephenson	Update/phone
4/26	2:35 p.m.	Ch 12 TV, Beaumont	Russell	Stephenson	Update/phone
4/26	2:40 p.m.	Ch 6 TV, Beaumont	Shepard	Stephenson	Update/phone
4/26	2:48 p.m.	KYKZ radio, LC		Stephenson	Update/phone
4/26	2:55 p.m.	Ch 10, Lafayette		Miller	Update/phone
4/26	3 p.m.	KPLC-TV Ch 7, LC	Gray	Friend	Live update/plant gate
4/26	3 p.m.	KVHP-TV Ch 29, LC	Lee	Stephenson	Live update/city hall
4/26	5 p.m.	KPLC-TV Ch 7, LC	Murphy	Friend	"Live at Five"/plant gate
4/26	5:15 p.m.			Friend	Press conference/city hall

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
5:50 p.m.

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some may be released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry, through our coordinated emergency response system.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Use if asked

- Q. How did the contamination occur?
- A. At this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination.
- Q. What are the health effects of EO?
- A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.
- Q. What do you use EO for?
- A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.
- Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Union Carbide and Hoescht-Celanese.

Facts about the Alcohol Ethoxylate Unit

The unit was built in 19XX and has a capacity of 65 million pounds per year. EO is brought to the plant by rail car.

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
7:20 p.m.

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

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Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Union Carbide and Hoescht-Celanese.

Press Release

VISTA

90-13

4/26/90
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: John Friend
(318) 494-5341
or Bob Miller
(318) 494-5333

EO Tank Contents Processed at Chemical Plant

APRIL 26, 1990 - Vista Chemical Company's Lake Charles Chemical Plant late this afternoon completed processing of water-contaminated ethylene oxide from a 25,000 gallon storage tank.

"The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts. Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately," said John Friend, Chemical Plant manager.

Friend reported that Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency.

"We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry. The local emergency response officials and Vista officials think that the system worked very well," Friend noted.

According to Friend, preliminary investigations point to a water leak in the internal cooling coil in the ethylene oxide tank as the cause of the water contamination.

(Continued)

For more information on Vista Chemical Company, see the reverse of this sheet.

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VISTA CHEMICAL PLANT EO TANK STATUS
Continued

"We've put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again," stated Friend. "We're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant. Our Lake Charles operation has had 28 years' experience in handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident. We want to continue that record forever."

Friend extended his thanks to the public officials of Westlake, Mossville, Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing this incident to a safe conclusion. In addition, he paid thanks to the members of the media who helped keep area residents informed during the incident.

###

(4/26/90)

Vista Chemical Company

4/26/90

Draft for use when emergency ends.

We've completed removal of the water-contaminated ethylene oxide from the tank and our operations are returning to normal. The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts. Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately.

Vista had in-plant systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency. Those systems worked.

We had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system, put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry, to alert the local emergency response officials and the public, and we think that system worked very well, too.

I regret the incident happened and the inconvenience and apprehension it caused for the citizens of Westlake, Mossville and surrounding communities.

I want to thank the public officials of Westlake, Mossville, Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing this incident to a safe conclusion.

And I particularly want to thank the members of the media who have helped us keep the people informed.

We still don't have information on how the tank became contaminated with water. We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again.

And we're going to make sure we have the best and state-of-the-art systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant.

We at Vista have had 28 years' experience in handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident. We want a new record that runs forever. Again, thanks to everyone for your help and understanding.

If asked

Q. You mean you're going to continue the operations that caused all these problems in the first place? Why aren't you going to close down this operation.

A. We believe ethylene oxide, along with all the chemicals we use or make, are of great benefit to our society. For instance, EO is used to make household and industrial detergents and other cleaning products we all use every day.

But we also believe that they must be handled with care, by trained, experienced people. That's how we expect to continue to operate our business.

Q. How did the water contamination occur?

A. As I said earlier, at this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination. We have a team looking into the cause of the contamination.

Q. What are the health effects of EO?

A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.

Q. What type of cancer does it cause?

A.

Q. We've received some calls from some of your employees saying there have been repeated safety problems with this unit or that they have been exposed to EO in the unit. Would you comment on that?

A.

Q. When was this unit last inspected?

A.

Q. What did that inspection show?

A.

Q. You said you have a 28 year history of safe operations with this chemical. Weren't you part of Calcacieu Chemical's operations and didn't they blow up their plant as a result of an EO accident?

A. Calcacieu Chemicals was a joint venture of Conoco and Cities Service. Vista, of course, was part of Conoco at one time. However, Calcacieu Chemicals' operations were totally separate from ours, with different plant management and different operations. They did manufacture ethylene oxide, but I'm not familiar with the facts about the incident you mentioned.

- Q. Do you manufacture EO?
A. No. We purchase it from Oxychem .

Facts about the Alcohol Ethoxylate Unit

The unit was built in 1962 and has a capacity of 65 million pounds per year. EO is brought to the plant by rail car.

Background

At about 2 p.m. yesterday afternoon (April 25) Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

The contamination could have led to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which was only half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure when the emergency began.

Trained operators in Vista's ethoxylate unit continuously monitored the temperature inside the tank. That would have given us the first indication if a chemical reaction was beginning. Vista personnel began removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this operation took almost 24 hours.

If the uncontrollable chemical reaction had begun, operators could have dumped the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some of it could have been released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista told all non-essential Lake Charles Chemical Plant personnel to remain at home. We shut down our alcohols unit except for one growth reactor, because the alcohols unit is located just north of the ethoxylate unit and the wind was from the south. All other units at the chemical plant functioned normally, but some product shipments were disrupted yesterday and today. Construction on our EXAM project was halted and contract workers were told to go home. Both our VCM plant and our LAB plant operated normally throughout the emergency.

Vista was in contact with the Mayor of Westlake, the police and other emergency personnel, as well as nearby industry throughout the emergency and coordinated emergency actions with them.

Both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, were closed by the city, as a precaution. Conoco shut down its turnaround operations last night, but made the decision to restart work this morning. Four Westlake schools, Westwood elementary, Western Heights elementary, Westlake High, and Mossville Elementary were closed today. Local media was very cooperative, maintaining coverage of the incident through the night and helping Vista communicate with its employees.

Vista Chemical Company

4/26/90--3:20

Draft for use when emergency ends.

We've completed removal of the water-contaminated ethylene oxide from the tank and our operations are returning to normal. The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts. Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately.

Vista had in-plant systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency. Those systems worked.

We had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system, put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry, to alert the local emergency response officials and the public, and we think that system worked very well, too.

I regret the incident happened and the inconvenience and apprehension it caused for the citizens of Westlake, Mossville and surrounding communities.

I want to thank the public officials of Westlake, Mossville, Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing this incident to a safe conclusion.

And I particularly want to thank the members of the media who have helped us keep the people informed.

We still don't have information on how the tank became contaminated with water. We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again.

And we're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant.

Our Lake Charles operation has had 28 years' experience in handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident. We want to continue that record forever. Again, thanks to everyone for your help and understanding.

If asked

Q. You mean you're going to continue the operations that caused all these problems in the first place? Why aren't you going to close down this operation.

A. We believe ethylene oxide, along with all the chemicals we use or make, are of great benefit to our society. For instance, EO is used to make household and industrial detergents and other cleaning products we all use every day.

But we also believe that they must be handled with care, by trained, experienced people. That's how we expect to continue to operate our business.

Q. How did the water contamination occur?

A. As I said earlier, at this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination. We have a team looking into the cause of the contamination.

Q. What are the health effects of EO?

A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.

Q. What type of cancer does it cause?

A. One study that included results from three occupational groups has shown evidence of an increased occurrence of leukemia and stomach cancer. Other studies on worker populations have shown no significant increases in cancer rates.

Q. We've received some calls from some of your employees saying there have been repeated safety problems with this unit or that they have been exposed to EO in the unit. Would you comment on that?

A.

Q. When was this unit last inspected?

A.

Q. What did that inspection show?

A.

Q. You said you have a 28 year history of safe operations with this chemical. Weren't you part of Calcacieu Chemical's operations and didn't they blow up their plant as a result of an EO accident?

A. Calcacieu Chemicals was a joint venture of Conoco and Cities Service. Vista, of course, was part of Conoco at one time. However, Calcacieu Chemicals' operations were totally separate from ours, with different plant management and different operations. They did manufacture ethylene oxide, as well as ethylene

To protect employees and the public, Vista told all non-essential Lake Charles Chemical Plant personnel to remain at home. We shut down our alcohols unit except for one growth reactor, because the alcohols unit is located just north of the ethoxylate unit and the wind was from the south. All other units at the chemical plant functioned normally, but some product shipments were disrupted yesterday and today. Construction on our EXAM project was halted and contract workers were told to go home. Both our VCM plant and our LAB plant operated normally throughout the emergency.

Vista was in contact with the Mayor of Westlake, the police and other emergency personnel, as well as nearby industry throughout the emergency and coordinated emergency actions with them.

Both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, were closed by the city, as a precaution. Conoco shut down its turnaround operations last night, but made the decision to restart work this morning. Four Westlake schools, Westwood elementary, Western Heights elementary, Westlake High, and Mossville Elementary were closed today. Local media was very cooperative, maintaining coverage of the incident through the night and helping Vista communicate with its employees.

Chris & John Friend

A

Q. Who's going to pay for the city and parish employees' overtime and other expenses incurred helping Vista with its emergency.

A. I want to reemphasize the excellent cooperation of the local emergency response groups. Vista is willing to work with city, parish and state response organizations to insure that the extraordinary costs are covered, because we want to ensure the taxpayers don't have to pay for them.

JML

Jim DeBernardi approves

Mike

**Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company**

4/25/90

9:00 p.m.

Since we last talked to you, the condition of the ethylene oxide tank has been stable. Our trained personnel continue to monitor the situation, and we're taking steps to empty the tank through the normal manufacturing process system. We're doing this to avoid dumping the tank through the emergency release system because some ethylene oxide could be released to the atmosphere if this was done.

Our process has slowed somewhat, and we're now estimating that the tank will be emptied in about 15 to 18 hours. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, we've begun shutting down other manufacturing units near the ethylene oxide unit, and we've sent all unnecessary personnel home. We've notified nearby industry, and the roads north and south of the plant have been closed.

We continue to be in touch with the Mayor of Westlake, the police and area emergency response personnel about the situation, and any additional actions will be coordinated with them.

**Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
6:50 p.m.**

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some may be released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry, through our coordinated emergency response system.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
First Draft

This afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

Under certain circumstances, that contamination might lead to a runaway chemical reaction and explosion.

The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

We are currently monitoring the temperature in the tank, which will give us warning if the chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system, but that could result in the release of a cloud of ethylene oxide to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Use if asked

Q. What are short-term health effects of EO?

A. Inhalation can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the of the central nervous system.

Q. What do you use EO for?

A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.

Vista Chemical Company
4/26/90-~~4~~ p.m.

5

We've completed removal of the water-contaminated ethylene oxide from the tank and our operations are returning to normal. The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts. Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately.

Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency. Those systems worked.

We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities, local officials and local industry. Vista thinks that system worked very well.

I regret the incident happened and the inconvenience and apprehension it caused for the citizens of Westlake, Mossville and surrounding communities.

I want to thank the public officials of Westlake, Mossville and Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing this incident to a safe conclusion.

And I particularly want to thank the members of the media who have helped us keep the people informed.

Our preliminary investigation points to a water leak in the internal cooling coil in the ethylene oxide tank as the cause of the water contamination. We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again.

And we're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant.

Our Lake Charles operation has had 28 years' experience in handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident. We want to continue that record forever. Again, thanks to everyone for your help and understanding.

If asked

Q. You mean you're going to continue the operations that caused all these problems in the first place? Why aren't you going to close down this operation.

A. We believe ethylene oxide, along with all the chemicals we use or make, are of great benefit to our society. For instance, EO is used to make household and industrial detergents and other cleaning products we all use every day.

But we also believe that they must be handled with care, by trained, experienced people. That's how we expect to continue to operate our business.

Q. How did the water contamination occur?

A. As I said earlier, at this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination. We have a team looking into the cause of the contamination.

Q. What are the health effects of EO?

A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.

Q. What type of cancer does it cause?

A. One study that included results from three occupational groups has shown evidence of an increased occurrence of leukemia and stomach cancer. Other studies on worker populations have shown no significant increases in cancer rates.

Q. We've received some calls from some of your employees saying there have been repeated safety problems with this unit or that they have been exposed to EO in the unit. Would you comment on that?

A.

Q. When was this unit last inspected?

A.

Q. What did that inspection show?

A.

Q. You said you have a 28 year history of safe operations with this chemical. Weren't you part of Calcacieu Chemical's operations and didn't they blow up their plant as a result of an EO accident?

A. Calcacieu Chemicals was a joint venture of Conoco and Cities Service. Vista, of course, was part of Conoco at one time. However, Calcacieu Chemicals' operations were totally separate from ours, with different plant management and different operations. They did manufacture ethylene oxide, as well as ethylene

glycol, used as auto coolant, but I'm not familiar with the facts about the incident you mentioned.

Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Oxychem.

Q. How does EO react with water? Why did you take such drastic actions?

A. We believe our actions were prudent considering the circumstances. Ethylene oxide can react very rapidly with water in the presence of a catalyst to form ethylene glycol, the principle ingredient in auto antifreeze. There was a remote possibility that impurities in the water could act as a catalyst to start this reaction. The ethylene glycol itself can then react with the EO to form polyethylene glycol, a polymer or plastic material which is nonhazardous. (Many molecules of EO are added together to form a long chain--a chain of paperclips being strung together.) Both reactions produce a lot of heat. All this heat then makes the reactions take place faster and faster and could lead to a runaway situation. If this takes place in a closed container, an explosion and fire could result.

In our case, there has been no catalyst present, so a reaction hasn't taken place.

Q. Who's going to pay for the city and parish employees' overtime and other expenses incurred helping Vista with its emergency.

A. I want to reemphasize the excellent cooperation of the local emergency response groups. Vista is willing to work with city, parish and state response organizations to insure that the extraordinary costs are covered, because we want to make sure the taxpayers don't have to pay for them.

Facts about the Alcohol Ethoxylate Unit

The unit was built in 1962 and has a capacity of 65 million pounds per year. EO is brought to the plant by rail car.

Background

At about 2 p.m. yesterday afternoon (April 25) Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

The contamination could have led to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which was only half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure when the emergency began.

Trained operators in Vista's ethoxylate unit continuously monitored the temperature inside the tank. That would have given us the first indication if a chemical reaction was beginning. Vista personnel began removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system,

converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this operation took almost 24 hours.

If the uncontrollable chemical reaction had begun, operators could have dumped the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some of it could have been released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista told all non-essential Lake Charles Chemical Plant personnel to remain at home. We shut down our alcohols unit except for one growth reactor, because the alcohols unit is located just north of the ethoxylate unit and the wind was from the south. All other units at the chemical plant functioned normally, but some product shipments were disrupted yesterday and today. Construction on our EXAM project was halted and contract workers were told to go home. Both our VCM plant and our LAB plant operated normally throughout the emergency.

Vista was in contact with the Mayor of Westlake, the police and other emergency personnel, as well as nearby industry throughout the emergency and coordinated emergency actions with them.

Both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, were closed by the city, as a precaution. Conoco shut down its turnaround operations last night, but made the decision to restart work this morning. Four Westlake schools, Westwood elementary, Western Heights elementary, Westlake High, and Mossville Elementary were closed today. Local media was very cooperative, maintaining coverage of the incident through the night and helping Vista communicate with its employees.

Vista Chemical Company

4/26/90--4 p.m.

DRAFT--employee News Bulletin at emergency end.

A

At about _____ TIME?, April 26, removal of the water-contaminated ethylene oxide from its storage tank was completed. Operations in the unit have returned to normal and employees are reporting to work for their normal shifts.

How the tank became contaminated is still a mystery. A team of employees has been formed to investigate the causes so steps can be taken to ensure this never happens again.

The Lake Charles Chemical Plant has a track record of 28 years' experience in handling ethylene oxide without a serious incident. We want to continue that record.

Vista has in-plant systems in place that monitor and control this type of emergency. Those systems worked during this one.

Vista participates in the Westlake/Lake Charles Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) system, put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry. CAER alerts local emergency response officials and the public in case of an emergency. Obviously, that system worked very well, too.

Provided by the Vista Chemical Co.
Public Relations Department
Questions? Contact Mike Reynolds,
713/588-3210.

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
Second Draft

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a runaway chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system, but that could result in the release of a cloud of ethylene oxide to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Use if asked

Q. How did the contamination occur?

A. At this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination.

Q. What are short-term health effects of EO?

A. Inhalation can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the of the central nervous system.

Q. What do you use EO for?

A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.

Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from _____.

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
6:50 p.m.

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some may be released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry, through our coordinated emergency response system.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Use if asked

Q. How did the contamination occur?

A. At this time, we do not know the cause of the water contamination.

Q. What are the health effects of EO?

A. Short-term exposure to high concentrations can cause headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and depression of the central nervous system. EO is also a cancer-suspect agent when exposure occurs over long periods of time.

Q. What do you use EO for?

A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.

Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Union Carbide and Hoescht-Celanese.

Official Statement
Vista Chemical Company
4/25/90
7:05 p.m.

At about 2 p.m. this afternoon, April 25, Vista Chemical personnel discovered that an ethylene oxide storage tank at its Lake Charles Chemical Plant in Westlake had been contaminated with water.

That contamination could lead to a uncontrollable chemical reaction and explosion. The tank is a 25,000 gallon bullet-shaped tank, which is approximately half full of liquid ethylene oxide under pressure.

Trained operators are monitoring the temperature of the inside of the tank. This will give us the first indication if a chemical reaction is beginning. Our personnel are removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process system, converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products. However, this will take approximately 12-15 hours.

If the reaction begins, we can dump the tank through an emergency release system. This system is designed to rapidly absorb the EO, but some may be released to the atmosphere. EO is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating, ether-like odor. The gas is explosive and flammable.

To protect employees and the public, Vista has sent all unnecessary personnel home, and we have contacted the Mayor of Westlake, the assistant police chief and nearby industry, through our coordinated emergency response system.

We understand that both Houston River Road, north of our plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of our plant, are being closed by the city, as a precaution.

As more information becomes available, we'll get it to you.

Use if asked

Q. How did the contamination occur?

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Q. What do you use EO for?

A. We use it to make alcohol ethoxylates, which are used in household and industrial cleaning products such as detergents, and personal care products, such as shampoos.

Q. Do you manufacture EO?

A. No. We purchase it from Union Carbide and Hoescht-Celanese.

45

Mike—FYI, press interviews as of 10:30 a.m. (one planned at noon with Ch 7)

PRESS INTERVIEWS

LCCP plant personnel: (Wednesday aft. and night until 11 p.m., don't know which Vista person did which one)

- Frank Adams, Southwest Daily News
- Iran Dickey, LC American Press
- Ch 7, Lamar Bourgeois
- Ch 29, Cynthia _____
- Ch 3, Lafayette, Kevin Roca
- LA99 radio
- KYKZ radio
- Ch 29, Louis Lee

GEW:

- 1 a.m., Ch 29 live interview, Louis Lee
- 3:40 a.m., Ch 10, Lafayette
- 4:50 a.m., LA99 radio, Kay Billedeaux

Also GEW—employee notifications and interviews 5 a.m. to 6:15 a.m. through:

- LA99 radio
- KAOK radio
- KXZZ radio
- KTQQ radio
- KBIU radio
- KYKZ radio
- KPLC TV, Ch 7 Lake Charles
- KVHP TV, Fox Ch 29
- KATC TV, Lafayette
- KLFY TV, Lafayette

John Friend:

- 6 a.m., live interview with KPLC TV

JCB:

- 8:25 a.m., live interview with Lamar Bourgeois, Ch 7, KPLC TV
- 9:00 a.m., interview with Louis Lee, KVHP Ch 29 TV, Lake Charles
- 9:15 a.m., interview with _____, Ch 6 TV, Beaumont
- 9:45 a.m., interview with Kay Billedeaux, LA 99 radio
- 10:00 a.m., interview with David _____, Ch 3 TV, Lafayette
- 10:10 a.m., interview with John Bridges, KYKZ radio
- 10:15 a.m., interview with Thelma O'Quinn, Westlake-Moss Bluff News
- 10:45 a.m., interview with Renee Russell, Ch 12, Beaumont
- 12 noon, live interview at roadblock setup with Ch 7 KPLC TV

Plant personnel:

- 10:30 a.m., live talk show interview with KAOK radio

N. J. ...

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS
APRIL 24-26, 1990
VISTA CHEMICAL COMPANY
LAKE CHARLES CHEMICAL PLANT, WESTLAKE
ETHYLENE OXIDE STORAGE TANK SITUATION

Tuesday,
April 24

- 1:00 p.m. • Plant operators notice variance in alcohol ethoxylate manufacturing process and began investigation to locate source of problem.

Wednesday,
April 25

- 8:00 a.m. • Operators determine water is present in 25,000 gallon ethylene oxide (EO) storage tank.
- 1:30 p.m. • Plant personnel begin dialogue with Vista and EO industry engineers.
- 3:30 to
4:15 p.m. • Plant management response team meets to analyze situation, gather additional data and identify options for resolving situation.
- Non-essential plant personnel and contract personnel sent home.
- 4:25 p.m. • Team members set CAER system in motion.
- 4:30 to
5:30 p.m. • Plant personnel notify Westlake officials, Conoco and other Vista plants in Westlake.
- Roadblocks are set up on Old Spanish Trail and Houston River Road.
- Vista Command Center is established at plant's Main Office.
- Media Center is established at Westlake City Hall.
- Operators begin removal of 11,500 gallons of EO from tank through normal manufacturing "batch" process, converting it to alcohol ethoxylates. Estimated time of completion set at 12-15 hours.
- 6:00 p.m. • Plant officials begin press interviews to inform citizens of situation.

Thursday,
April 26

5:00 to
6:00 a.m.

- Vista officials notify office and contract employees through radio and TV announcements to remain at home.
- School officials announced four school closings for the day.

9:00 a.m.

- Vista officials announce significant progress has been made--over 50% of EO removed and processed.

5:08 p.m.

- Tank is empty: Vista announces "all clear" through CAER system.

5:15 p.m.

- Final press briefing held at Westlake City Hall.

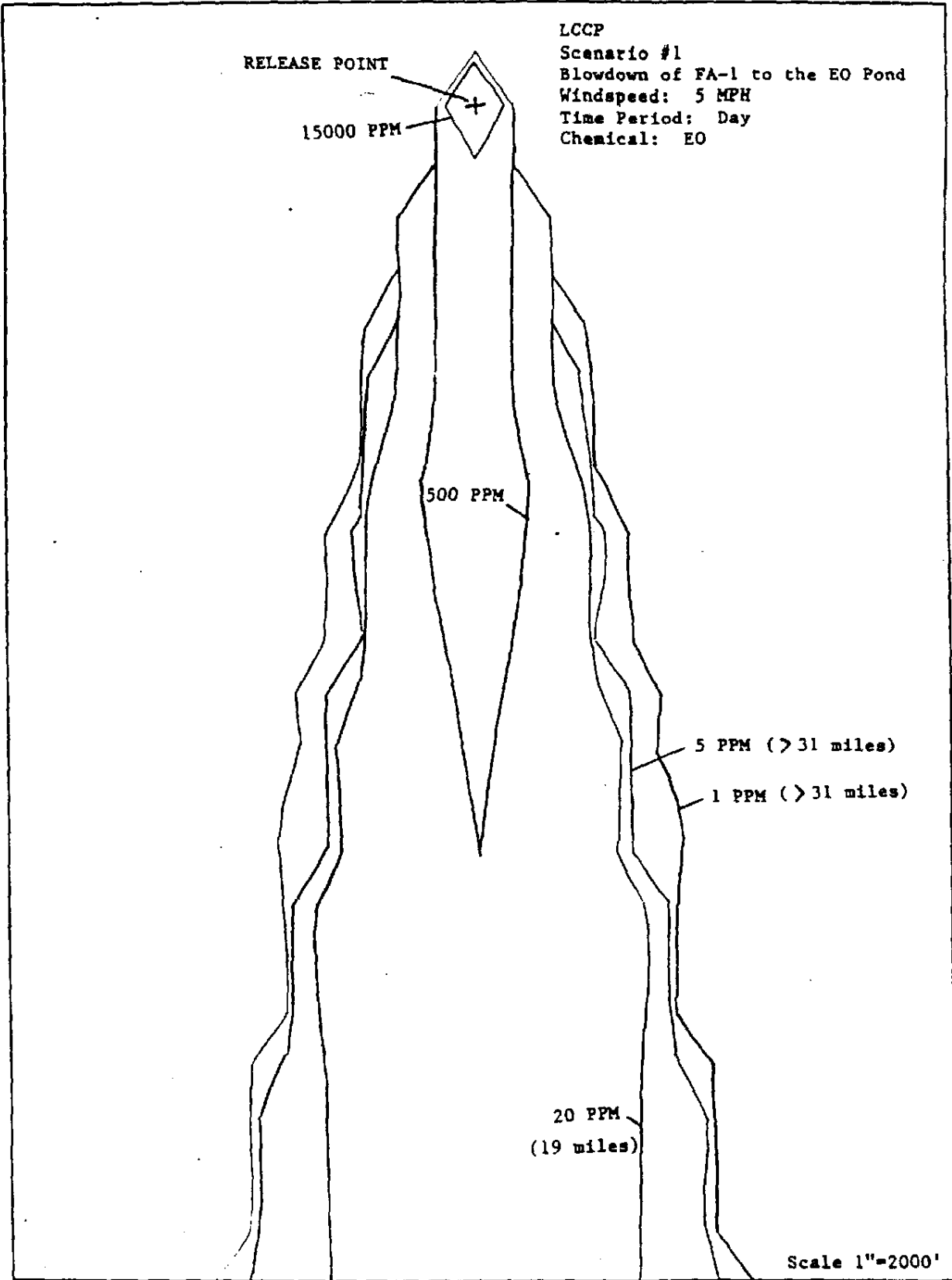
LCCP

SCENARIO 1

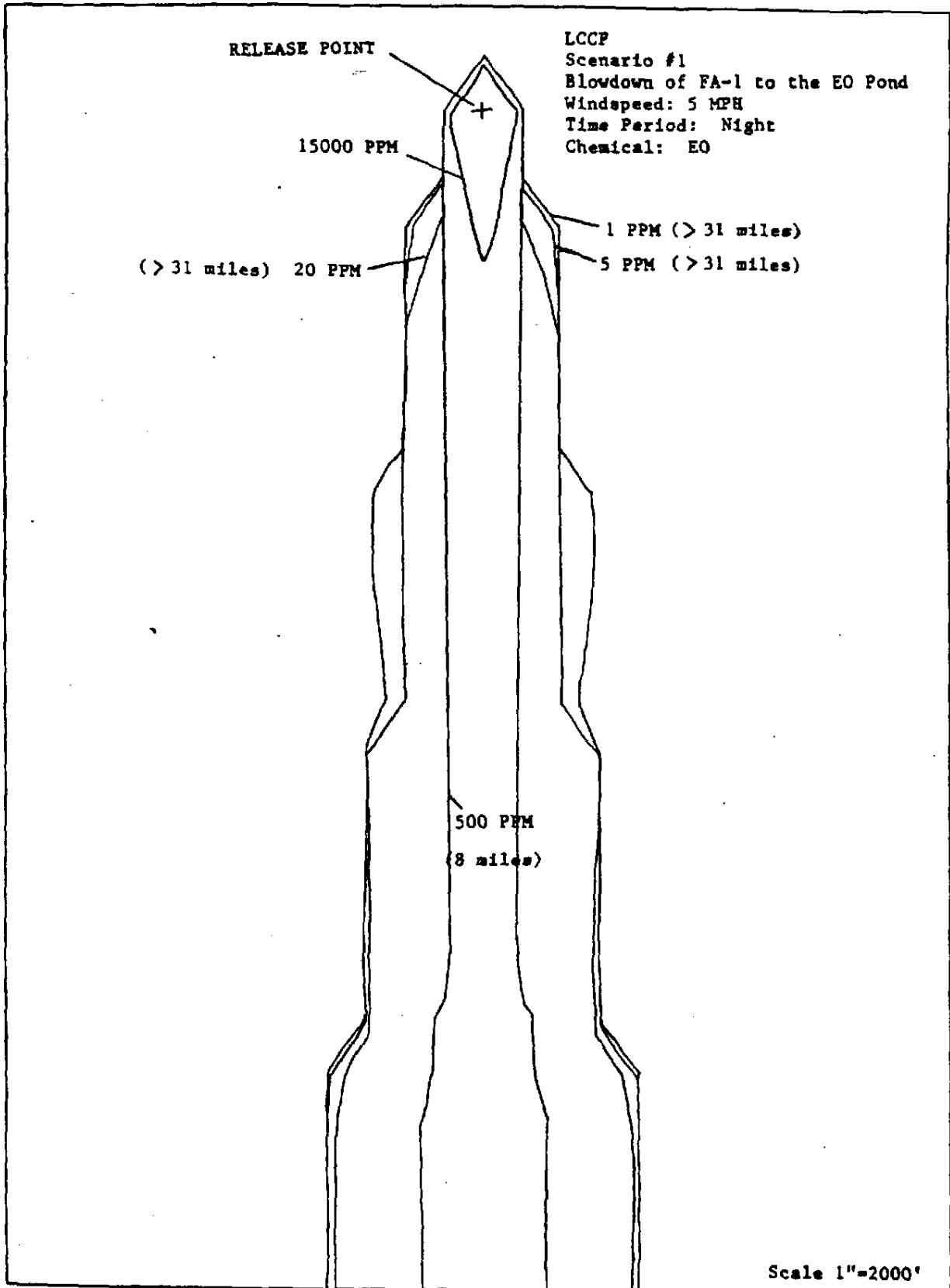
The E. O. Blowdown system provides for dumping FA-1 to a water filled dilution pond. The system consists of a 6" line from FA-1 to the pond where it then connects to a series of 10 distribution nozzles placed on the bottom of the water pond. Water can be injected into the blowdown flow if needed.

Emission Rate	2.9 lb./hr./ft. ²
Total Emission Rate	1.2 lb./ft. ²
Elevation	Pond Surface 5' above grade
Spill Area	Pond Surface Area 150,000 ft. ²
Location	S.W. MeCl Unit
Gas Composition	Ethylene Oxide with Entrained Water
FA-1 Volume	25,000 gallon maximum
E.O. Liquid Density	7.24 lbs./gallon (.8711)
E.O. Vapor Density	1.52 (air = 1)

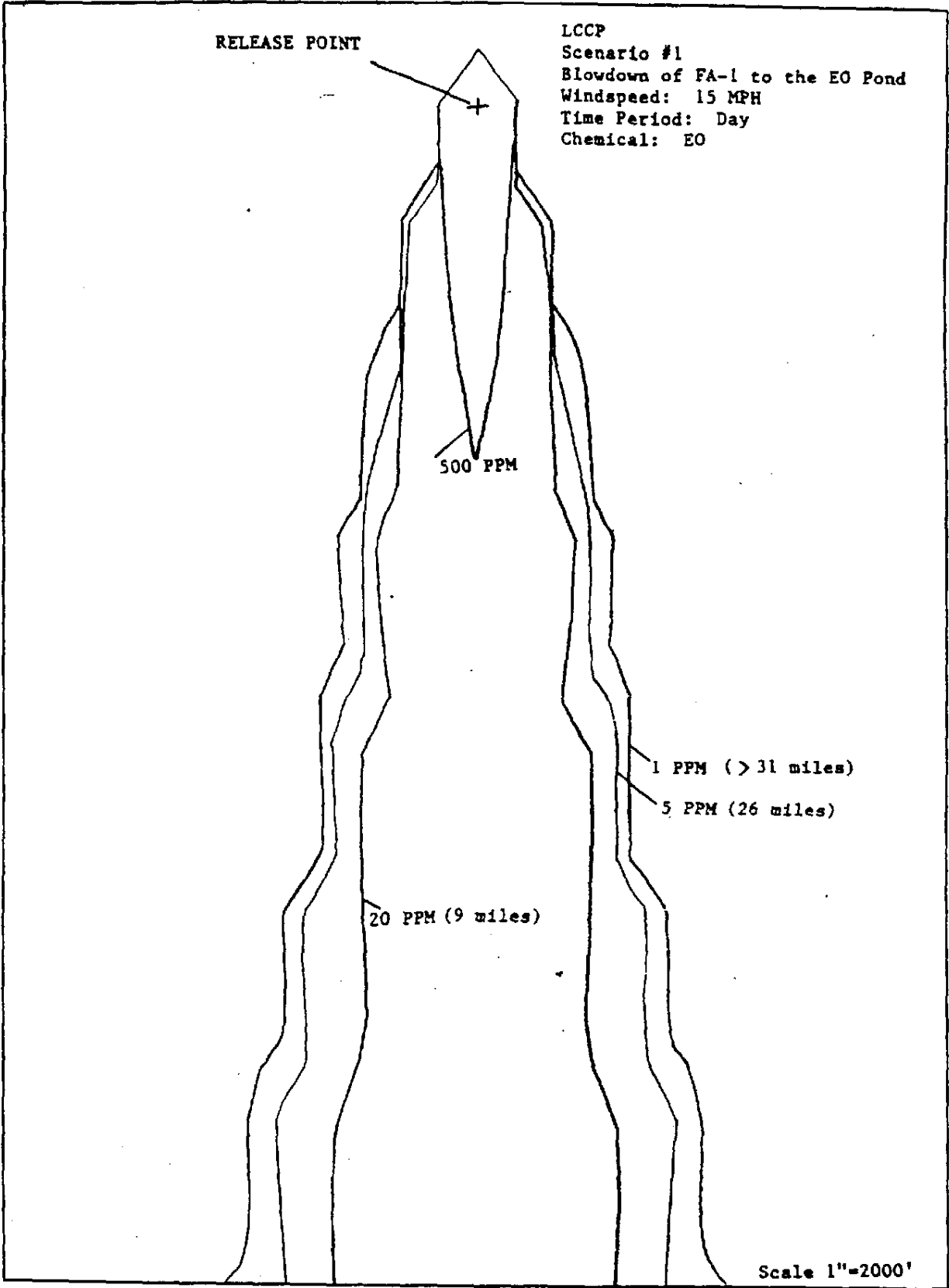
Emission Rates are based on FA-1 containing 25,000 gallons and that dumping requires 25 minutes.



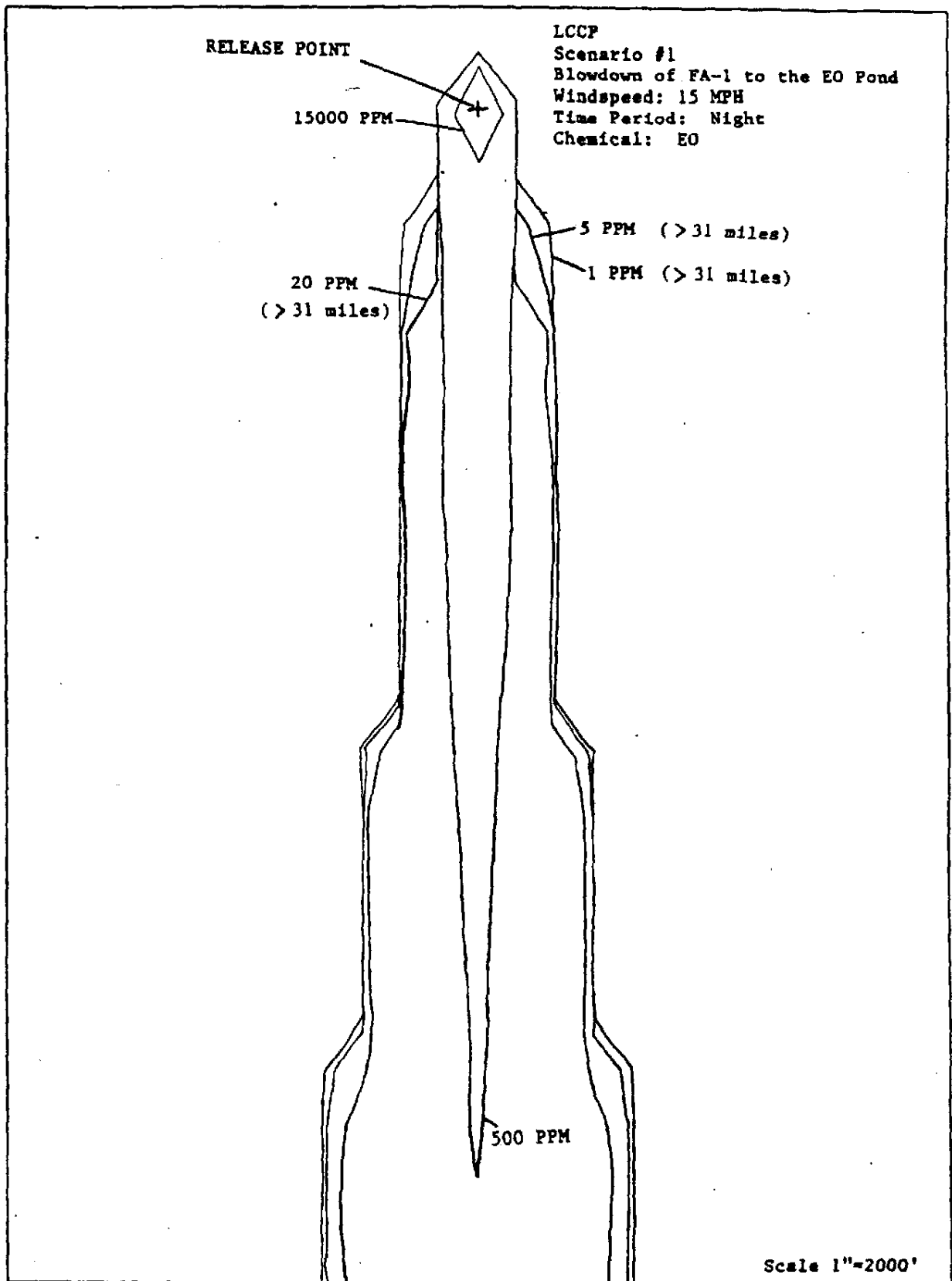
LCCP-3



LCCP-4

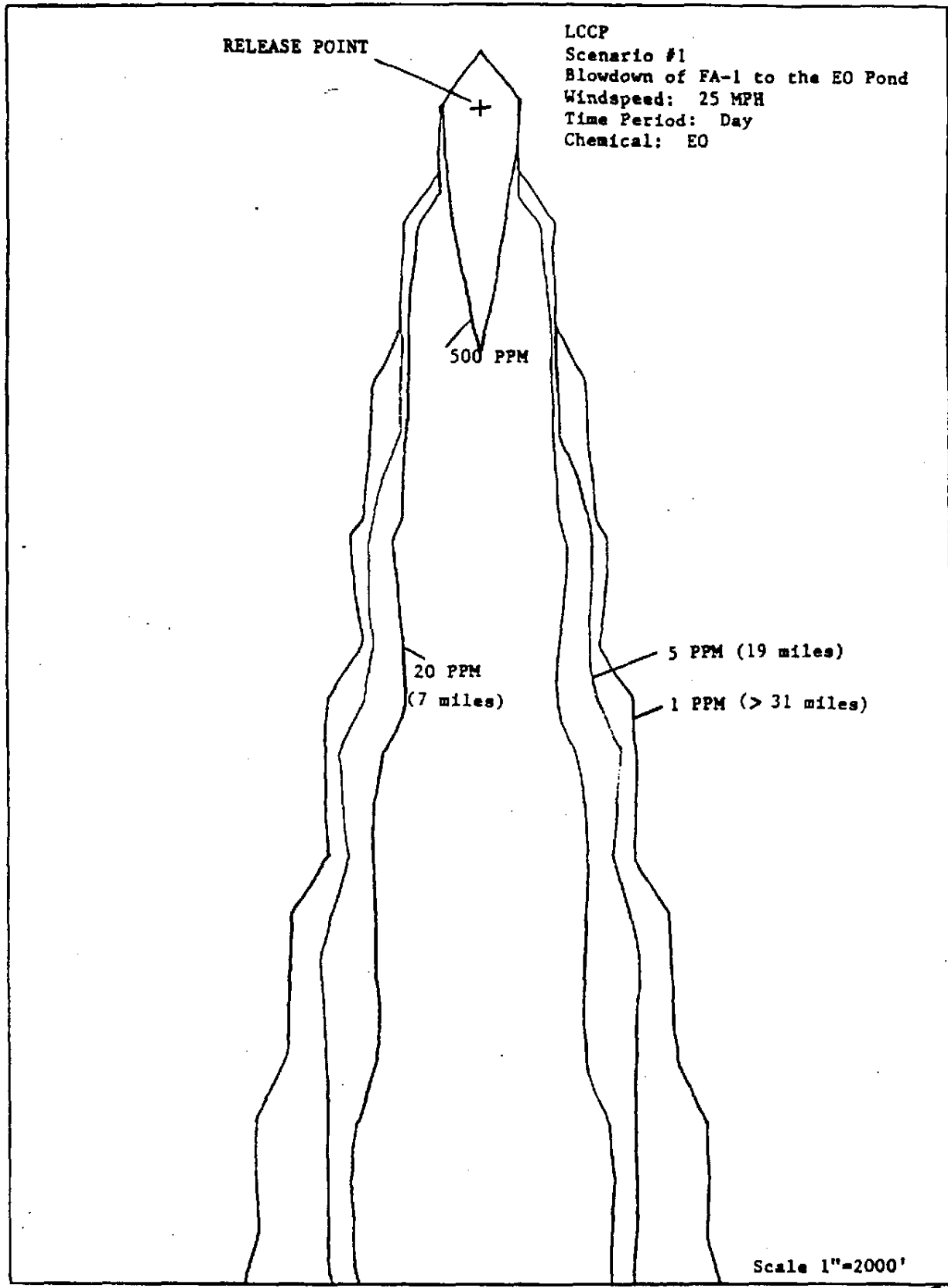


LCCP-5



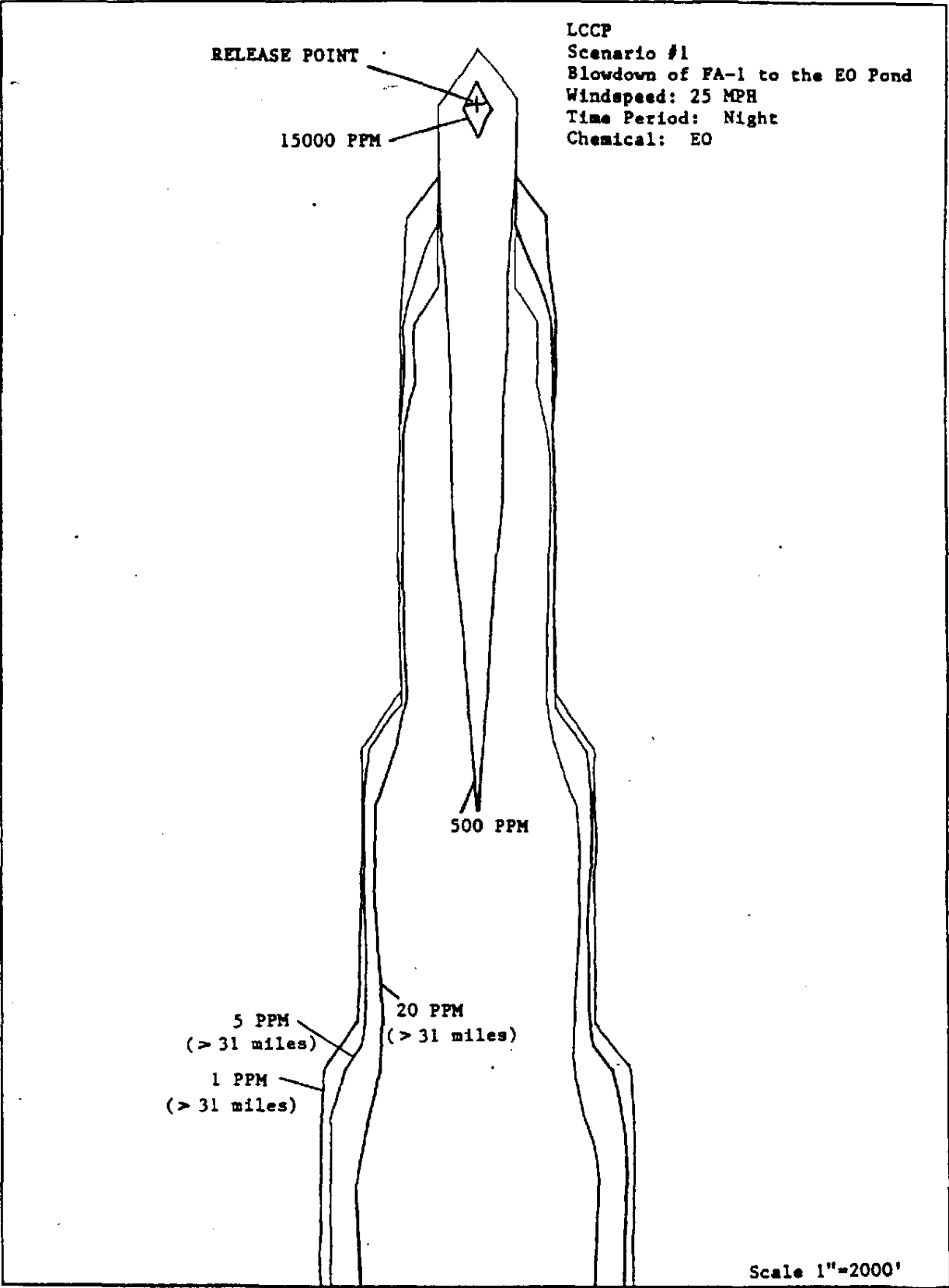
LCCP-6

VFA 000007785



LCCP-7

VPA 000007766



LCCP-8

LABORATORY ANALYSIS

DATE	TIME	ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE	BATCH NO.	HYDROXYL NUMBER	COLOR R.P.M.A.	P.H.	WATER %	CLOUD PT. °C	Glycerol %	REMARKS
		M/2L60								
4-24	7:20 AM		180	108	10	6.3	0.02	57	0.2	TYPICAL SPECIFICATION
"	10:30 AM		181	107 ± 10	50 MAX	6.7.5	0.19 MAX	57.5	3 MAX	
"	1:00 PM		182		15	6.5		51.2		POSSIBLE H ₂ O ENTER IN CLOUD
"	3:00 PM		183		15	6.5		49.0		FIRST OBSERVED EVIDENCE OF A REACTION
"	4:20 PM		FB-16		15	6.9		35.5		
"	5:30 PM		184		15	7.0		39.8		
"	9:00 PM		185		15	6.7		51.5		STARTING TOXIC - CHECK ON CLOUD PT.
"	9:15 PM		185		15	6.9		44.7		
"	10:25 PM		186		15	9.8		48.8		
4-25	12:11 PM		186		15	6.6		33.4		REACTOR SAMPLE
"	"		186		15	6.6		33.4		DURING PURSUIT SAMPLE
"	"		186		15	6.6		33.5		ADDED FILTER
"	"		187		15	6.9		34.3		REACTOR
"	"		187		15	9.7	0.22	34.3		REACTOR SAMPLE
"	"		FB-16		15	9.7	1.31	34.3		TANK SAMPLE
"	12:4		FB-16		15	9.7	1.31	34.3		TANK SAMPLE
(RESERVE)										
ETHYLENE DIBROMIDE			TANKS	COLOR R.P.M.A. MUR. 20/15						
4-24	5 AM / 7 AM		0747-93117	5	010009					RE-SAMPLE DUE TO APHA COLOR
"	9 AM		"					0.08	0.02	REACTOR, REACTOR
4-25	4 AM		"					4.67		REACTOR TANK
"	4:10 AM		FB-1					13.8		REACTOR TANK - LATE SAMPLE
4-26	12:45 PM		FB-1 to Det-1							

1012766 BUI - NOTION GREEN 42126 WHITE

Data From
Union Carbide
Handling Guides

OPERATION SAFETOX

PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

FOUR BASIC FACTS PROMOTING THE SAFE HANDLING OF ETHYLENE OXIDE

Ethylene Oxide is -

- a flammable liquid and easily ignited. It has an auto-ignition temperature, in air, of 429°C. (804°F) and can burn at as little as 3% mixture in air.

Open flames, sparks, and internal combustion engines can ignite even small amounts. The vapor poses the additional threat of flashback if ignited.

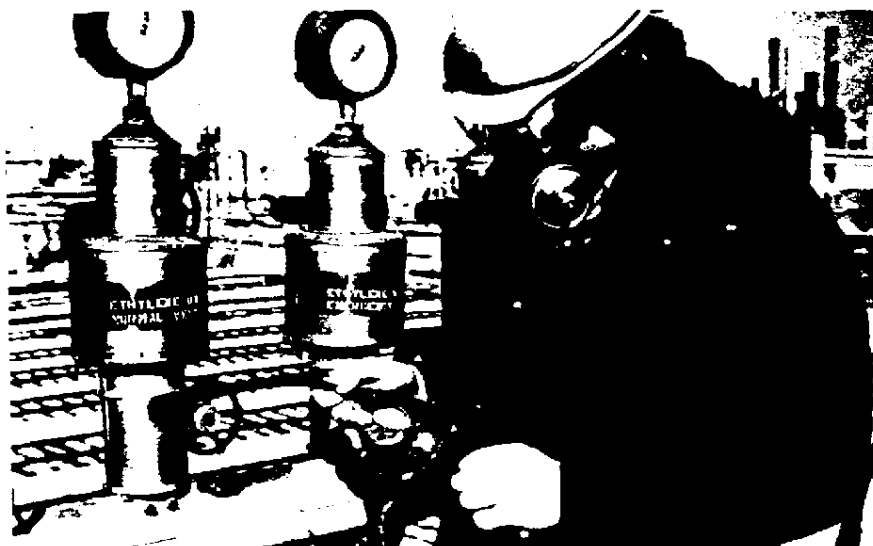
- a vapor that will decompose violently when exposed to certain temperatures. Specifically, at 560°C (1040°F), it will explode in a contained atmosphere.

An attribute of Ethylene Oxide that deserves great respect is the susceptibility of Ethylene Oxide vapor to decomposition if the vapor is pure enough and if it is exposed to a high temperature. The decomposition can be quite violent, especially at higher pressures. Recent experiments have also given evidence of similar Ethylene Oxide decompositions in the *liquid* phase. However, the pressures and temperatures required are higher than will normally be encountered in the shipment and storage of Ethylene Oxide.



PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

- **toxic and, therefore, the vapor should not be inhaled.** At this time a threshold limit of 50 ppm in air is required by OSHA as a safe concentration for daily eight hour exposures in a 40 hour week. However, the standard for Union Carbide employees is 5 ppm TWA-8. Nausea, respiratory ailments, and/or death may result if Ethylene Oxide is inhaled in greater concentrations. Overexposure for long periods may lead to desensitization.



- **highly reactive** with many things, including air and water. This can be beneficial under controlled circumstances; however, this reactivity can be dangerous during unloading. Ethylene Oxide can react with trace amounts of such substances as alkalis, metal oxides, metal chlorides or acids which may cause a dangerous rise in the temperature and pressure leading to a fire or explosion. Once it has mixed with other substances its properties may change, possibly lowering the temperatures at which it will ignite or vaporize.

Ethylene Oxide comes in two forms: liquid and vapor. We, at Union Carbide, transport it in its liquid form because it's safer and more stable than as a vapor. The liquid can vaporize if it comes in contact with water, including moist air or earth, because it has a flash point of less than -18°C (0°F). This is a factor to consider when dealing with spills, leaks, and disposal.

Vaporization can also occur if Ethylene Oxide is mixed with alcohol, ether, or other organic solvents. Remember that these vapors are flammable, explosive, and toxic. If it is mixed with water at temperatures ranging from 0° to 10°C (32° to 50°F), it may form a hydrate resembling ice, which, upon thawing, may release flammable and toxic vapors or cause severe skin blistering if touched.

Ethylene Oxide is completely water soluble. Its flammable hazard

Procedures for Unloading

PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

can be neutralized by water when it is diluted at a minimum of 100 volumes of water to one of Ethylene Oxide. At this diluted concentration, Union Carbide has found that it is no longer flammable or explosive. At concentrations of less than 100 volumes of water to one volume of Ethylene Oxide, it is not considered safe. It may still ignite and cause a blistering of the skin if touched. In all cases the toxic hazard will still exist. When Ethylene Oxide is stored longer than two weeks, for example as a reference sample, the temperature should not exceed 15°C (59°F); for shorter periods, the temperature should not exceed 30°C (85°F). Keep Ethylene Oxide away from open flames and other heat sources.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF ETHYLENE OXIDE

LIQUID	
Molecular Weight	44.05
Apparent Specific Gravity at 20/20°C. (68/68°F.)	0.8711
ΔSp. Gr./Δt. at 20° to 30°C. (68° to 86°F.)	1.00140
Coefficient of Expansion at 20°C. (68°F.)	0.00161
Water Solubility	Complete
Heat of Vaporization at 1 atm.	6.1 Kcal/g. mole
Surface Tension	28.0 dynes per cm.
Viscosity at 10°C. (50°F.)	0.28 cps.
Vapor Pressure at 20°C. (68°F.)	1095 mm. Hg
Boiling Point at 760 mm.	10.4°C. (50.7°F.)
at 300 mm.	- 11.0°C. (- 12.2°F.)
at 10 mm.	- 66°C. (- 86.8°F.)
ΔB.p./Δp. at 740 to 760 mm. Hg	0.033°C. per mm.
Freezing Point	- 112.6°C. (- 170.7°F.)
Refractive Index, n _D at 7°C. (44.6°F.)	1.3597
Heat of Fusion	1.236 kcal/g. mole
Specific Heat at 20°C. (68°F.)	0.44 cal. per g. per°C.
Explosive Limits in Air at 760 mm. Hg	Upper 100% by volume
	Lower 3% by volume
Flash Point, Tag open cup (ASTM Method D 1310)	< - 18°C. (< 0°F.)*
VAPOR	
Critical Temperature	196.0°C. (384.8°F.)
Critical Pressure	1043 psia
Auto-ignition Temperature in Air at 1 atm.	429°C. (804°F.)
Decomposition Temperature of Pure Vapor at 1 atm.	560°C. (1040°F.)
Heat of Combustion of Gas, gross	312.15 kcal/g. mole
Heat of Formation	12.2 kcal/g. mole
Thermal Conductivity at 25°C. (77°F.)	0.00002961 cal.-cm. per sec. per cm. ² per°C.

* Commercial material

The properties listed on this page are the important ones you should be aware of when handling or storing Ethylene Oxide. It is important to remember the effects of heat and pressure. Should a tank car be exposed to open flames, its contents could be heated to a point where the car explodes. When heated, Ethylene Oxide can explode at lower temperatures if there are even trace amounts of air present. When it is contaminated with other substances, the temperature at which these reactions will take place will be different, usually lower.

UPA 000007771

4/26/90

Calcasieu Chemical fire/explosion
Sources: Michael Reynolds
Jack Cameron, ext. 3328

Background summary:

EO is a very dangerous material to make and have around. In the past two years, two EO plant in Europe have blown up. Vista has never made its own EO, but always purchased it from another company. Some EO suppliers, very nervous about liability, stopped making it and/or refused to transport the material. This restriction on availability, coupled with ethylene price increases, drove the price of EO up from \$.25/lb. to \$.55/lb. several years ago.

More recently, with the prices of ethylene, EO and ethylene glycol dropping, some people are getting out of the business and availability is not a problem.

What happened at Calcasieu Chemical:

In the late 70s, a fire occurred at Calcasieu Chemical in La. (partnership between Conoco and City Services) which destroyed one of the plant's four EO reactors. There were no injuries or deaths. The reactor was rebuilt; the plant was modernized and ran for two more years. The unit was shutdown for business reasons—the partners decided it was not a profitable operation.

Ethylene gas is reacted with oxygen over a catalyst to make EO. This combination is very combustible/flammable. The EO is then "cleaned" and converted into ethylene glycol.

**IABC U.S. District 5
Silver Quill
Statement of Goals and Objectives**

1. Entrant's name and organization:

Chris Bozman—Public Relations Coordinator, Vista Chemical Company
900 Threadneedle, Houston, Texas 77079 713/588-3211

Title and description of entry:

"Ethylene Oxide Incident"

Category 1(c), Communication Programs—Crisis Communication

Entry includes:

- communication materials (press statements, employee bulletins, press release, press kit, debriefing speech)
- print newsclips
- video newsclips
- videotape of crisis response debriefing
- audio tape of crisis response debriefing
- copies of congratulatory letters and memos

2. Problem or opportunity:

A. Background

Vista Chemical's largest manufacturing facility is located in Westlake, Louisiana, less than five miles from Lake Charles. The nearly 400 employees at this location produce a variety of chemicals used to make consumer products ranging from vinyl siding to shampoo. The Lake Charles area is heavily industrialized; in fact, the overwhelming majority of jobs held by the 160,000 residents of Calcasieu Parish are directly or indirectly tied to refining and petrochemical manufacturing.

Fortunately, Vista has a history of maintaining a fairly positive and open relationship with the community. However, awareness and concern among citizens and local environmental groups over pollution and safety issues has increased steadily over the past several years. Even in the best of times (non-crisis), maintaining a favorable public opinion requires continual community involvement, strong relationships with local media and sound decisions regarding public relations policy and practice. Much of this responsibility at Vista's Louisiana facility falls on the shoulders of the plant manager, supported heavily by Vista's corporate public relations staff in Houston.

As a corporate PR staff member, I was assigned part-time to Vista's Lake Charles chemical complex last fall to assist plant management in building a foundation of proactive media and community relations activities. The strength of this foundation was put to the test last April, when a potentially serious and life-threatening situation developed at the plant.

B. The Problem

On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 25, employees at Vista's plant in Westlake discovered the presence of water inside a storage tank containing ethylene oxide, a chemical used in the manufacture of laundry detergent. Ethylene oxide can be highly volatile. The combination of water and ethylene oxide could create a runaway chemical reaction, leading to a potentially devastating explosion and fire, capable of destroying all of Vista's facility and the surrounding neighborhoods. Plant management immediately assembled a Crisis Response Team to evaluate the situation and determine possible solutions. At this time, the plant manager notified Mike Reynolds, corporate public relations manager in Houston, and asked for PR staff members to be sent to the site for media relations assistance.

The Crisis Response Team knew that minute-by-minute, around-the-clock monitoring of the storage tank's temperature would give plant employees the first indication that a chemical reaction had begun. If a reaction did begin, they realized only one option would remain—to "dump" the contents of the tank into a nearby waste treatment pond. However, doing so might expose employees and citizens to a toxic cloud of ethylene oxide. The Crisis Response Team concluded that the safest way to control the contaminated ethylene oxide was to empty the contents of the tank through the plant's normal manufacturing process; in other words, make product. However, this process would take time. Initial estimates for completion ranged from 15 to 18 hours. To ensure the safety of Westlake citizens during this lengthy process, roads surrounding the plant were blocked immediately and nearby schools and businesses were closed for Thursday. Just in case, evacuation plans were coordinated with Westlake City officials.

3. Goals and Objectives

- To continually update employees, neighbors, city officials, emergency response agencies and other citizens in Calcasieu Parish through local and regional media concerning the status of the ethylene oxide situation, even if all that could be said was, "The situation is unchanged. We're continuing to make progress in draining the tank and eliminating the danger."
- To maintain Vista's credibility and favorable public image as a responsible, safety-conscious employer and good neighbor among local media and Calcasieu Parish citizens.

4. Implementation

- Reynolds (corporate PR manager) established two Crisis Communication Teams—one to give resource and backup support from Houston, headed by him, and one on the "front line" in Lake Charles, headed by me.
- The Lake Charles PR team loaded a car with a Macintosh computer and printer, press release stationery and other equipment and materials that would be needed to coordinate press briefings.
- With assistance from the Houston PR team, the plant's employee relations director gave initial statements to the press late Wednesday afternoon and early evening.
- Gretchen Weis and I (the Lake Charles PR team) arrived on the scene at 11 p.m. and established

A

a media center at the City Hall in Westlake, still within the community but far enough away from the plant to ensure the safety of the press. Gretchen took the "night shift," relieving the plant's employee relations director, and I checked in at a nearby hotel.

- I relieved the Gretchen at 7 a.m.-Mary Ann Stephenson left Houston at 9 a.m. to join the Lake Charles PR team.
- The Houston PR team published and distributed the first bulletin to Vista employees worldwide on Thursday morning concerning the situation in Lake Charles.
- The Lake Charles PR team gave on-camera TV updates and on-the-air radio updates almost hourly to the press as requested throughout the night and all day Thursday. Several stations set up live broadcast facilities in the parking lot for around-the-clock coverage.
- Mary Ann Stephenson arrived in Lake Charles at 11 a.m., allowing me to assist the plant manager at the plant with communication wrap-up plans and last-minute on-camera interviews.
- As the situation neared a successful completion by early afternoon on Thursday—about 20 hours after it began—the Houston PR team and the Lake Charles PR team worked together to plan a late afternoon press conference. We produced a final statement to be read by the plant manager and a press release announcing the successful resolution.
- Mary Ann Stephenson and I staged the press conference, announcing the plant manager's intention to read his statement and field questions. All Lake Charles-area media were represented. We faxed press releases to regional media who were unable to attend.
- The Houston PR team distributed the second bulletin to Vista employees worldwide on Friday morning, announcing the successful resolution of the situation.
- The Lake Charles PR team continued working Friday morning to help the plant manager prepare his presentation for the afternoon debriefing, conducted by the Local Emergency Planning Council (LEPC). We produced the plant manager's speech, a timetable of events, photos of the affected storage tank and a fact sheet on Vista's Lake Charles Chemical Complex. We prepared press kits containing the above materials, as well as the press release issued the day before, to distribute at the meeting.

Constraints:

The pressures of time and stress were tremendous. The potential for environmental damage and loss of life was extremely high. Southwest Louisiana turned its attention to this crisis for an intense 24-hour period. The plant manager and his team juggled the need to solve the problem quickly and safely with the citizens' need to know what was happening, and how it might affect their lives. The Houston and Lake Charles PR teams had to skillfully juggle reporters' deadlines, senior management approvals, plant management requests and re-writes, digging for answers to technical questions and responses to sensitive issues, and planning for various possible scenarios quickly and effectively to create a win-win resolution, both for Vista and for the community.

5. Results and Evaluations.

The stated objectives were met:

- Including the late afternoon press conference on Thursday, April 26, approximately 40 direct press contacts were made within about a 24-hour period, an average of approximately one eve-

ry 40 to 45 minutes. (See video press clip tape enclosed, copies of newsclips and list of press interviews.)

- Members of local and regional media congratulated Vista in writing and verbally, calling the manner in which the company handled communication about the incident a "textbook case." (See copies of press clips, video and audio tapes of 4/27 LEPC debriefing meeting.)
- Members of the Local Emergency Planning Council and Westlake City officials expressed respect and congratulations for the example Vista set in how a crisis situation should be handled. (See copies of press clips, video and audio tapes of 4/27 LEPC debriefing meeting.)
- Vista senior management and Lake Charles plant management recognized the exemplary efforts displayed by the Public Relations Department in maintaining Vista's positive public image in Lake Charles. (See copies of congratulatory/appreciation memos.)

3230
**Vista monitoring tank
after leak discovered**

By FRAN DICKEY
American Press Staff Writer

WESTLAKE — Vista Chemical Co. is monitoring a potentially explosive tank which was contaminated Wednesday when water from a cooling line leaked into ethylene oxide stored there.

Bob Miller, director of employee relations, said personnel discovered the contamination sometime after lunch.

The process of removing the ethylene oxide from the tank through the normal manufacturing process — converting it into alcohol ethoxylate products — should be finished today if all goes well, Miller said.

Much of the plant was shut down and parts of Houston River Road, north of the plant, and Old Spanish Trail, south of the plant, have been closed as a precaution. However, no evacuation has been called.

Under certain circumstances, the contamination might lead to a runaway chemical reaction and explosion, Miller said.

"Normally, there is a line un-

derneath it to keep the tank cool. There was a leak in that line and some water got into the ethylene oxide and water can cause a premature reaction," Miller said.

"If that happens what we would have to do is right away vent all the product out of the line, we call that a blow down, and we would send that to a pond. The risk you have with doing that is a vapor cloud and if it hit an ignition source it could cause an explosion," he said.

Ethylene Oxide is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating ether-like odor. It is explosive and flammable.

The 25,000-gallon bullet-shaped tank is about half-full.

The Westlake Police Department, Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office and fire departments were on the scene.

Possible Vista emergency alerts Westlake residents

Officials of Vista Chemical and the City of Westlake were on full alert Wednesday, monitoring a potentially-dangerous tank of ethylene oxide.

Late Wednesday night, Calcasieu Parish School Superintendent Charles Oakley announced that Westlake High School, Arnett Middle School, and Western Heights, Westwood and Mossville elementary schools will not hold classes Thursday at the request of Mayor Dudley Dixon.

Vista officials said construction workers should not report to Vista projects Thursday morning.

The chemical, which Vista Director of Employee Relations Bob Miller said is used in making alcohol ethoxylate product, was slowly being drained from a tank containing some 12,000 gallons of the chemical.

The potential danger was from water used to cool the tank. "If ethylene oxide is mixed with water, you have the potential of a

chemical reaction and explosion," Miller explained. He said Vista personnel were monitoring temperatures of the tank, since a rise in temperature could signal a possible reaction.

Mayor Dixon said the city's emergency preparedness plan was in full operation, although at 7 p.m., the city's emergency warning system had not been needed.

"We have blocked off all roads in what might be a danger area," Dixon reported. "Only essential personnel needed at the plants are being allowed in, our fire and police departments are on standby, and we have ringed the area where evacuation might be required. We've notified the high school and Red Cross, and if there is a need, we can move immediately to evacuate anyone in danger."

Dixon and Miller agreed a long night was in store. The problem was noted by Vista workers about 4:15 p.m., and it may be late Thursday before the tank is

completely drained.

Miller said the tank, with a capacity of 25,000 gallons, was being reduced by normal manufacturing methods. "If the temperature begins to rise, we would dump the product into a pond designed for that purpose," Miller explained.

"The problem with that is that dumping it could form a vapor cloud, which could cause an explosion if it reached a heat source," Miller added.

Dixon praised Vista's handling of the emergency. "We have been talking to experts all over the country, and all agree that as long as the material is stabilized, there's no problem," the mayor said.

"We (city officials) have been into the plant, we've seen what the Vista people are doing and everyone is working well together," Dixon added. "The volume of the material in the tank is constantly decreasing, and the danger decreases proportionately."

3230

Five schools close in Calcasieu after leak poses hazard

By The Associated Press

WESTLAKE — A leak in a chemical storage tank which posed an explosion threat forced the closure of all five schools in Westlake and Mossville today, authorities said.

The leak was discovered Wednesday in a 25,000-gallon tank of ethylene oxide at the Vista Chemical Co. plant near Westlake, said Bob Miller, a company spokesman.

He said some water from a cooling line got into the tank, which was half-full, and under certain circumstances, the contamination could result in a runaway chemical reaction and explosion.

"Normally, there is a line underneath it to keep the tank cool," Miller said. "There was a leak in that line and some water got into the ethylene oxide, and water can cause a premature reaction.

"If that happens, what we would have to do is right away vent all the product out of the line — we call that a blow-down — and we would send that to a

pond. The risk you have with doing that is a vapor cloud, and if it hit an ignition source, it could cause an explosion," he said.

Calcasieu Parish Schools Superintendent Charles Oakley ordered the four schools in Westlake — two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school — and the one elementary school in Mossville closed today.

Westlake is on the western edge of the city of Lake Charles. Mossville is about five miles west of Westlake.

Ethylene oxide is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating ether-like odor. It is explosive and flammable.

Vista officials were monitoring the tank's temperature.

"If the temperature stays constant we can continue through the normal process of getting the product out of the tank. Everything has been stable since we discovered it," Miller said.

He said all the ethylene oxide should be removed from the tank today.

Explosion threat shuts down town

WESTLAKE (AP) — Five schools and most local businesses closed Thursday because of what authorities said was the threat of an explosion in a storage tank where a chemical was contaminated by a water leak.

Mayor Dudley Dixon declared an end to the emergency about 5 p.m. Thursday after officials at Vista Chemical Co. emptied the 25,000 gallon tank.

Much of the plant was shut down during the procedure and sections of roads near the plant were closed to traffic as a precaution, police and deputies said. However, there was no evacuation.

Company spokesman Bob Miller said water from a cooling line got into the tank, which was half-full of ethylene oxide. He said the leak was discovered during a routine sampling Wednesday.

The chemical, which is both explosive and flammable, is used in the manufacture of household cleansers, hair shampoo and radiator fluid. It is a colorless gas at normal pressure, with an irritating ether-like odor.

Under certain circumstances the contamination could result in a runaway chemical reaction and explosion, Miller said.

Plant manager John Friend said the temperature of the volatile chemical is stabilized in its holding tank by internal coils that circulate refrigerated water. About 11,500 gallons of the chemical were contaminated by the slight rupture in the cooling coils, he said.

Company officials decided that, rather than dumping the chemical in a tailing pond and releasing inflammable gas, the best method of dealing with the chemical would be to continue processing it until the tank was empty.

Friend said the situation, though critical, had been constantly monitored by instruments and processing systems that were already in place.

"Our preliminary investigation points to a water leak in the internal cooling coil . . . as the cause of the water contamination," said Friend. "We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident."

Calcasieu Parish Schools Superintendent Charles Oakley closed four schools in Westlake — two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school — and the one elementary school in Mossville.

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3230

Threat of tank explosion shuts schools, businesses

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Westlake is on the western edge of the city of Lake Charles. Mossville is about five miles west of Westlake.

Vista emergency measures called off

By KERRY JAMISON
American Press Staff Writer

WESTLAKE — Emergency measures taken by the Vista Chemical Company and Westlake police, following the discovery of a contaminated chemical tank, were called off at 5 p.m. Thursday by Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon.

The contamination of Vista's only ethylene oxide holding tank was discovered during a routine sampling of the chemical at 2 p.m. Wednesday by Vista

employees.

"Our preliminary investigation points to a water leak in the internal cooling coil . . . as the cause of the water contamination," said plant manager John Friend. "We've already put together a team that has started an investigation of the causes of this incident."

Ethylene oxide is used in the manufacture of household cleansers, hair shampoo and radiator fluid. The processing of this chemical is only one of eight different operations at the

plant.

Friend said the temperature of the volatile chemical is stabilized in its holding tank by internal coils that circulate refrigerated water. Approximately 11,500 gallons of the chemical were contaminated by a slight rupture in the cooling coils. The estimated cost of the material was \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Authorities at the plant decided that rather than dumping the chemical in a tailing pond and releasing inflammable gas, the best method of dealing with

the chemical would be to continue processing it until the tank was empty.

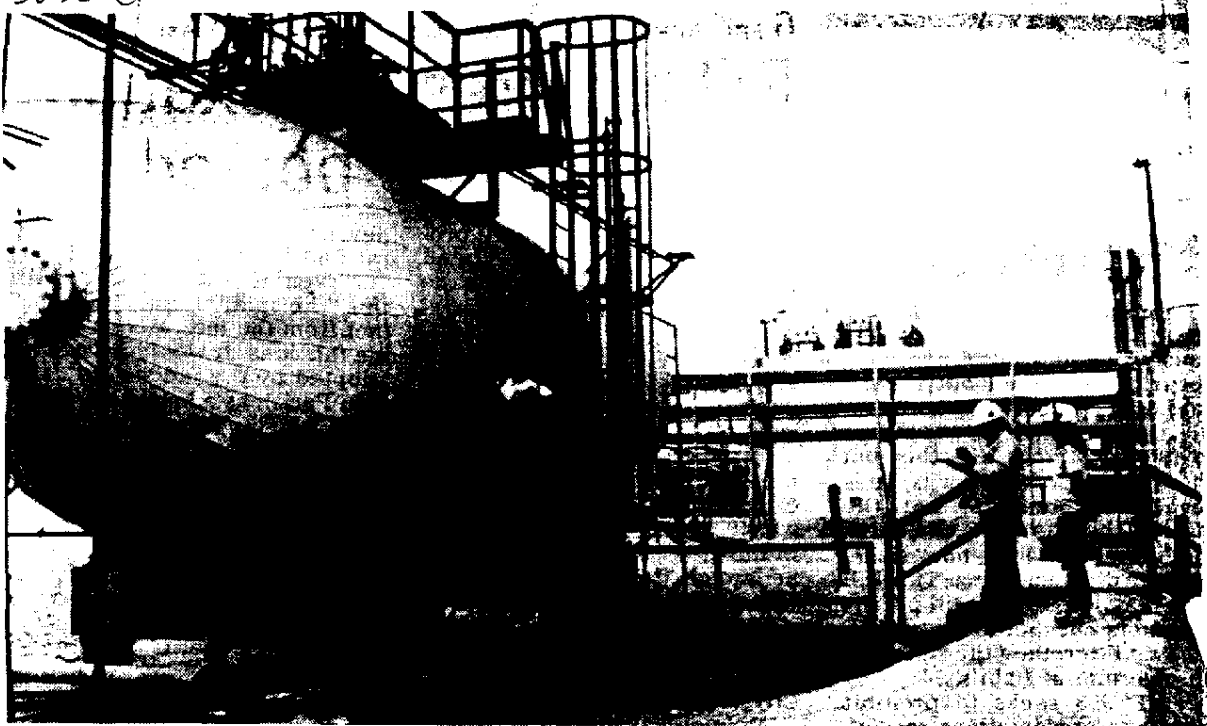
During the emergency, streets around the Vista plant were blocked and some plant employees and school children stayed home. Local businesses were closed.

Everyone agrees the threat was very real.

"At room temperature ethylene oxide emits a highly explosive gas," said Mark Delaney,

Please see VISTA Page 5

3230 ct



Vista Chemical Company operators Irene McGuire and Kenneth Miller monitor the internal temperature of the Ethylene Oxide storage tank that was contaminated at the Westlake facility. Ruptured cooling coils inside the tank were discovered Wednesday afternoon setting off a 27-hour emergency cordon around the plant. The emergency ended at 5 p.m. Thursday.

Vista

Continued from Page 1

assistant professor of chemistry at McNeese State University. "In the right concentration it is highly irritating to the eyes and can cause pulmonary edema (swelling of the lung tissues) when inhaled."

Friend said the situation at the plant, though critical, had been constantly monitored by instruments and processing sys-

tems that were already in place. "We kept a close eye on the temperature," said Vista spokesman Bob Miller. "If it had started to go up we would have had plenty of time to divert the ethylene oxide into a pond."

Dixon congratulated Vista on reporting the problem immediately to local civic authorities, rather than trying to solve the problem in secrecy.

A Community Awareness and

Response System was also in place in Westlake in which the Calcasieu Sheriff's Department, the Civil Defense and several off-duty policemen helped out.

Jim Herford, Westlake chief of police, said the incident cost the city \$1,000 to \$2,000 in overtime man-hours, a cost Friend said the company would discuss a positive response to.

Westlake schools and businesses will be open today.

Vista, Westlake return to normal

Vista Chemical Company and the City of Westlake began resuming normal activities late Thursday, after Vista officials announced a potentially-dangerous chemical tank had been emptied.

Vista Manager John Friend announced an "all clear" at a late-afternoon press conference at Westlake City Hall, ending a tense 24-hour alert which began at the plant Wednesday afternoon.

"I regret the incident happened", said Friend, a comment which may qualify as the understatement of the year.

"We've put together a team that has started an investigation of the cause of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again," added

Friend. "We're going to make sure we have the best systems for safely storing and using ethylene oxide in our plant".

Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon joined Friend in a deep sigh of relief. All available city police, fire personnel and other employees, bolstered by a number of Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's deputies, were mobilized to virtually seal off a wide area surrounding the Vista plant.

Dixon had special praise for the media, particularly television reports during the tense night and day. "Television helped tremendously by staying on the air all night to keep people informed of the situation" the mayor said.

p.m. Wednesday evening when plant officials noted a leak in a cooling coil inside a 25,000 gallon storage tank containing 11,000 gallons of ethylene oxide. Had sufficient water mixed with the chemical, a reaction could have occurred, with the potential of an explosion.

"The danger was serious", Friend admitted.

Vista employees maintained a vigil at the tank throughout Wednesday night and Thursday, monitoring temperatures to see that a critical point was not reached. Normal plant manufacturing procedures were used to empty the tank.

Late Thursday, Vista completed processing of the water-contaminated chemicals

from the tank, and roadblocks around the plant were removed.

Friend said cooperation of city employees, its police and fire departments, and the assistance of the Sheriff's Department and Civil Defense, had key roles in the success of the situation.

"The emergency situation is over and all of our employees should report to work for their normal shifts", said Friend. "Roads around our plant have been reopened, and schools and local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately".

Classes were suspended Thursday at Westwood, Western Heights and Mossville elementary schools, Arnett Middle
See Vista Page 7B

Vista

From Page 1A

School and Westlake High School. Construction work also was halted at Vista, and traffic to and from Vista and the adjacent Conoco plant was curtailed during the emergency.

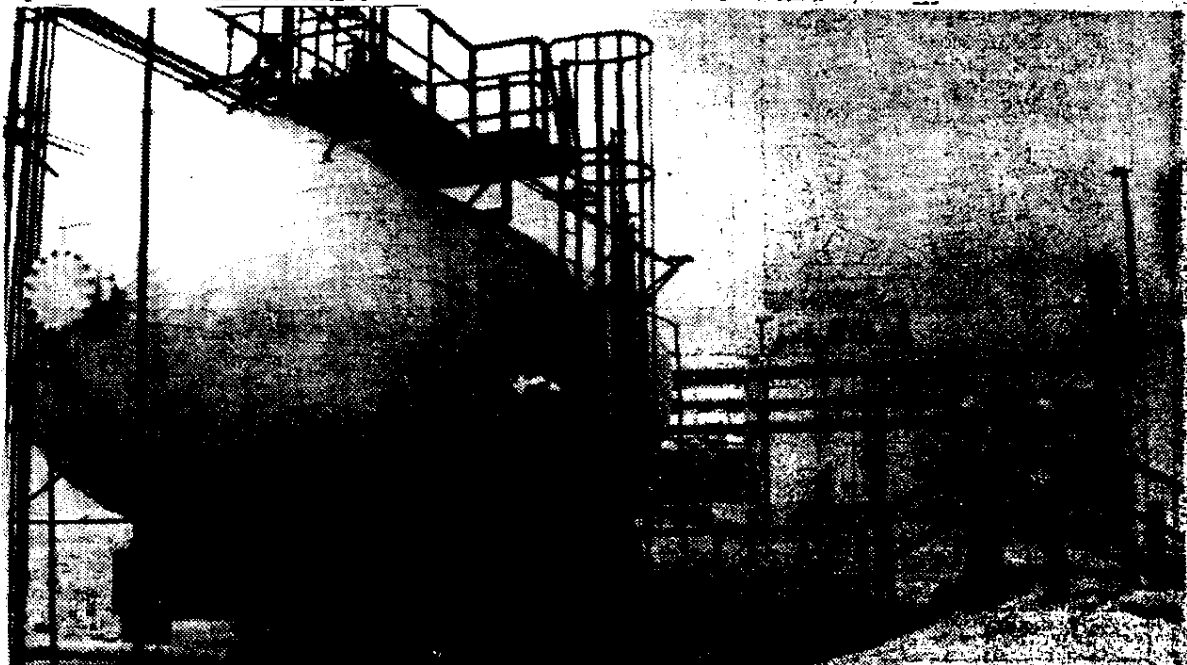
Friend reported that Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control

this type of emergency.

"We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry. The local emergency response officials and Vista officials feel

the system worked very well," Friend noted.

According to Friend, preliminary investigations point to a water leak in the internal cooling coil in the ethylene oxide tank as the cause of the water contamination.



Keeping watch

Vista Chemical Company operators Kenneth Miller and Irene McGuire maintain a vigil at an ethylene oxide tank which kept plant officials and the nearby city of Westlake on a 24-hour alert. Miller and

McGuire were members of a team which kept a careful check on the internal temperature of the tank to be certain no dangerous reaction was taking place. (Vista Chemical photo).

City back to normal after alert

It's business as usual in Westlake this week, and traffic down Sulphur Avenue and Houston River Road is heavy once again. The seriousness of last week's scare appears to be forgotten.

The city faced a real emergency last Wednesday evening when a water line erupted inside a storage tank at Vista Chemical containing ethylene oxide creating the possibility of an explosion.

A citywide alert was called and city and plant officials came together and had the situation under control immediately. All available city police, fire personnel and other employees, bolstered by a number of Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's deputies, were mobilized to virtually seal off a wide area surrounding the Vista plant.

Vista Chemical Company and the City of Westlake began resuming normal activities late Thursday, after Vista officials announced a potentially dangerous chemical tank had been emptied.

Vista Manager John Friend announced an "all clear" at a late-afternoon press conference at Westlake City Hall, ending a tense 24-hour alert which began at the plant Wednesday afternoon.

"I regret the incident happened", said Friend. "We've put together a team that has started an investigation of the cause of this incident so we can take steps to make sure it never happens again. We're going to make sure we have the systems for safely storing using ethylene oxide in the plant".

Westlake Mayor Dudley Dixon joined Friend in a deep sigh of relief. Dixon had special praise for the media, particularly television reports during the tense night and day.

"Television helped tremendously by staying on the air all night to keep people informed of the situation" the mayor said.

"The danger was serious" Friend admitted.

Vista employees maintained vigil at the tank through Wednesday night and Thursday monitoring temperatures to make sure a critical point was not reached. Normal plant manufacturing procedures were used to empty the tank.

Late Thursday, Vista completed processing of the water-contaminated chemical from the tank, and roadblocks around the plant were removed. Friend said cooperation of city employees, its police and fire departments, and the assistance of the Sheriff's Department and Civil Defense, had key roles in the success of the situation.

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Alert

from P. 1A

Local industry should be able to return to normal operations immediately.

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Friend reported that Vista had instrument and process systems in place to monitor and to control this type of emergency.

"We also had the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system. That system was put together with the cooperation of the surrounding communities and local industry. The local emergency response officials and Vista officials feel the system worked very well," Friend noted.

"Our Westlake operations have had 28 years' experience in

handling this hazardous chemical without a serious incident" the plant manager added. "We want to continue that record, forever."

Friend extended his thanks to the public officials of Westlake, Mossville and Calcasieu Parish for their help and cooperation in bringing the incident to a safe conclusion. In addition, he paid thanks to members of the media who helped keep area residents informed during the emergency.

LEPC praises Vista for emergency plan

By Craig Mergist
News correspondent

Local Emergency Planning Commission chairman Samuel Russell described the way Vista Chemical handled a potentially dangerous situation last week as a textbook example of how to deal with an emergency.

LEPC held a debriefing last Friday afternoon concerning the intrusion of water into a tank containing ethylene oxide at the Vista plant in Westlake.

Plant manager John Friend said EO can react very rapidly with water in the presence of a catalyst. The reaction may produce heat which could lead to an explosion in a closed container.

Water entered the storage unit from a leaking internal cooling coil. Impurities in the water could have acted as a catalyst, according to Friend.

Friend said the Community Awareness and Emergency Response system "works and works well. I want to thank the public officials of Westlake, Mossville and Calcasieu Parish for

their help and cooperation."

Plant operators first noticed a problem in the manufacturing process at 1 p.m. Tuesday. After discovering water in the tank, team members notified area officials through the CAER system late Wednesday afternoon.

Operators began removing the 11,500 gallons of EO in the tank through normal processing and four schools in the Westlake area were closed Thursday as the processing continued.

Vista shut down the all night about 5 p.m. Tuesday through the CAER system.

"If the temperature had a sustained increase, we would have notified officials to consider evacuation," Friend said. "However, the tank's condition remained stable throughout this incident."

Friend said 5 pounds of the EO were released at one point, but posed no threat to employees or nearby residents.

Vista uses EO, a liquid, to make alcohol ethoxylate products used in making detergents and personal care products.

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Editorial

Earth Day is gone but far from forgotten

It's been a week since Earth Day, but yet the talk of the environment is still around.

Last week was fairly exciting in Calcasieu Parish with a chemical plant emergency and environmental cleanup issues topping the list.

The Calcasieu Estuary Task Force tried to allow the public to have input into the committee's priorities, but very few people attended the meeting.

That committee has gotten off to a shaky start with few people willing to allow members time to get the ball rolling. The committee is a good idea if it can develop and coordinate a plan to clean up the Calcasieu estuary working through state and federal agents.

The problems facing the estuary committee are many. There is little that anyone can do, but maybe the group can set priorities and keep the pressure on environmental agencies until something is done to begin the cleanup process. It will



Hugh Braddock
Editor, Daily News

take years and this committee is barely two months old.

Vista Chemical's midweek emergency situation proved to be valuable to the Local Emergency Planning Commission.

Residents of Westlake and Moberly watched closely as Vista officials dealt with a potentially dangerous situation. Water has gotten into a tank containing ethylene oxide and that mixture could have caused an explosion.

There was no explosion and the emergency situation was resolved Thursday afternoon, about 25 hours after the situation began.

The plant officials did their job; the

emergency agencies personnel did their work, and all systems operated as they should have.

Emergency preparedness had come under question during recent tests, but apparently most of the problems have been worked out. These systems are vital to our communities living in harmony with industrial neighbors. It's comforting to know that things went well.

Sam Russell, chairman of LERC, said the situation should be written up as a textbook example of how to deal with an emergency.

The Department of Environmental Quality is now jumping on the Earth Day bandwagon.

Secretary Paul Templett said he is now ready to meet with industrial leaders to reduce the amount of pollution in Louisiana. He wants action within 60 days.

When has this white knight been? If he can get action in 60 days, we should be able to expect DEQ to get on with cleanup programs which have been on the drawing

boards for years.

Residents in the Ellender Bridge area met with DEQ officials last week in hopes of getting some action on the cleanup of the Ellender Bridge dump site. Companies involved in that cleanup say they are ready to proceed, but DEQ is holding up the work. Maybe now we can get action in 60 days!

Just around the corner is the Cleanest City Judging. Remember that Sulphur and Lake Charles are in the state final. The judging is scheduled during the second week in May, so we have time to do a little extra cleaning up.

The Sulphur Garden Club, the Town and Country Garden Club and the city of Sulphur are spearheading Sulphur efforts. They cannot do it alone. If you have a group which can volunteer to help clean an area, help elderly citizens clean up their yards, or help with other activities which will make Sulphur a cleaner, more attractive place to live, call City Hall at 527-4600 and volunteer.