

Monsanto Chemical Company
Texas City, Texas

cc: Plant Manager's Safety Board

July 21, 1961

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Subject: VCM Spill in Department 22 - July 18, 1961

SUMMARY

On July 18, 1961, about 0930, a VCM spill occurred from a leaking block valve during repairs to the LC on the VCM reactor condenser separator (22S6). The spill was stopped after about 10 minutes when an operator drove a wooden plug into the valve outlet. There was no damage to equipment. The operator was treated at First Aid for a chemical burn (HCl present in the VCM) on the right forearm.

DESCRIPTION

The LC float chamber had been blocked in and turned over to maintenance with a warning that the inlet block valve to the LC on 22S6 might not be holding.

Maintenance carefully broke out two unions in the piping downstream of the valve and no leakage was evident. They then broke out the flange at the valve and found the valve plugged with process solids. While the fitters were preparing to install a blind flange on the valve, the plug blew out causing the spill. Process pressure was about 6 psig. The valve could not be closed any further.

Fire permit work was stopped and the spill alarm turned in. The spill was stopped after about 10 minutes, when an operator drove a wooden plug into the valve outlet. An estimated 200 gallons of VCM were spilled.

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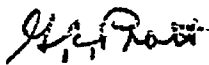
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COMMENTS

1. The maintenance personnel followed proper procedures in breaking out the piping.
2. The emergency action of the operators prevented a more serious spill.
3. The spill occurred for about 5 minutes before the alarm was sounded. The immediate concern of the operators was to stop the spill. However, there were other operating personnel in the area who should have investigated and turned in the alarm sooner.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

1. The hazards of materials in the VCM area will be reviewed by operating supervision with maintenance personnel in the area by July 21. During the investigation it was evident that maintenance people need to be better informed about the hazards of chemicals handled in the area.
2. The need for turning in fire and spill alarms as soon as possible will be stressed to both operating and maintenance personnel. This will be done by the respective supervision and completed by August 1.
3. Supervision in the future will carefully review jobs of this nature to determine if repairs are necessary immediately or can be delayed until a shutdown.


G. E. Pratt

RECOMMENDATION

Maintenance personnel should be periodically retrained by operations supervision in the hazards of the various areas. The zone supervisors and general operating supervisors should schedule this training.


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