

CTIRP

VISTA

TO: K. L. Fogg

FROM: M. D. Lunsford
DATE: October 27, 1992

SUBJECT: CTIRP Incident - Karnack, TX

Interoffice
Communication

On Monday, October 5, 1992, at approximately 4:15 a.m., I received a call from Keith Fogg informing me that a derailment had occurred involving seven Vinyl Chloride Monomer tank cars in Karnack, Texas. The following is a summary of information about the event.

At approximately 3:15 a.m. on Monday, October 5, 1992, a 100 car KCS freight train suffered a derailment in the community of Karnack, Texas, near the intersection of Highways 43 and 134. Involved in the derailment were seven vinyl chloride tank cars, all from the Vista VCM Plant and en route to Oklahoma City. There were no other cars involved. A security officer at the nearby Longhorn Munitions Plant contacted KCS and local authorities after witnessing the event. KCS personnel surveyed the scene, and after determining that VCM was involved, made the appropriate notifications. CHEMTREC was notified, and in turn contacted the Vista LCCP Main Gate. Keith Fogg contacted me and informed me of the derailment. At the time, it was known that there were no readily apparent leaks, and response personnel from KCS, Morton Thiokol, the Harrison County Sheriff's office, and local EMS personnel were on the scene. CHEMTREC had sent additional information to the scene on vinyl chloride.

After discussing the event with personnel on the scene, and notifying plant management, a decision was made to respond from Lake Charles to the scene. The initial response team consisted of Charlie McDonald and myself. After obtaining the CTIRP response vehicle from LCCP, and procuring some equipment from the VCM Plant, the team responded at about 6:00 a.m.

Upon arrival at the scene, at 10:18 a.m., the following items were noted:

1. The derailment had occurred near the entrance to the Longhorn Munitions Plant, in the community of Karnack. The office building for the plant was almost 1/4 mile away. The Karnack Post Office and Fire Station were about 100 yards from the site. The Karnack High School was within 1/2 mile of the site. A grocery store was within 1/4 mile of the derailment. Winds were calm, and the weather was sunny.

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2. There were seven VCM cars involved. Two cars were derailed, three on their sides, and two cars were resting upside down on their domes.
3. A loose perimeter had been established along Highway 134 by the Sheriff's Department. Access to the site was controlled. The Post Office and High School were closed.
4. Personnel were on the scene from KCS and Hulcher Services, and equipment was being readied to rerail the cars. Emergency responders included fire department, EMS, and sheriff's department personnel. Morton Thiokol had dispatched its fire truck to the scene from the Munitions plant.
5. The high school had been closed for the day, along with the post office. No residents had been evacuated, but buses from the school district were standing by in case evacuation of the community was necessary. Two invalids living nearby had been visited by the EMS crews. About 50 response personnel were on the scene.
6. There were three television news crews filming at the site, outside the perimeter.

After assessing the incident, I asked for a meeting with representatives from all responding agencies. During that meeting, a discussion was held on the hazards of VCM. KCS outlined their plans for rerailing the cars. Fire and EMS officials discussed their plans for evacuation should the situation change. All parties acknowledged their agreement with the plans as outlined, and the rerailing task began.

During assessment, and before and after rerailing, the cars were checked thoroughly with an explosimeter and TLV analyzer for leaks. No levels of VCM were detected during the entire rerail operation.

At approximately 12:45, Kerry Gregg arrived from Houston. There was little information available to the public up to that point, and some misinformation had been heard. After consultation with Pete Markey, it was determined that a statement should be made to the press. At 1:50 p.m., I issued that statement and fielded a few questions. By 2:30 p.m. the press had left the scene.

The seven cars were rerailed by 6:40 p.m. without incident. Five of the cars sustained insulation damage and one car received coupler damage. The braking systems were damaged on all five cars that had rolled off their trucks. Upon mutual agreement, it was decided to relocate and tranload six of the

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seven cars. OHM was chosen as the contractor to do so. Stan Polwort arrived on the scene to provide assistance from S & T, and an inspector from the Bureau of Explosives arrived shortly thereafter.

On Tuesday, October 6, I spent the morning communicating with interested parties on the particulars of the event and obtaining information on the transfer process. KCS moved the six cars and six empty cars to the transfer site, and Charlie McDonald inspected the site. At 3:20 p.m., a meeting was held between Vista, KCS, and OHM concerning the transfer process. A review was conducted on Vinyl Chloride and its hazards. OHM outlined their transfer procedures and agreed to allow Vista personnel to inspect the setups before beginning transfers. Nitrogen purges would be used to clear the hoses before disconnecting. It was agreed that transfer operations would stop as trains passed on the main line, or if lightning was in the area. After agreement was reached on OHM's and Vista's procedures, preparation began for transfer. Barry Enix arrived from LCCP at 7:00 p.m.

At 9:29 p.m. on October 6, the first transfer was begun. At 7:47 a.m. on October 7, the second OHM crew began transfer operations. During transfer operations, Barry Enix and Stan Polwort covered the night shift, while Charlie McDonald and myself provided daytime coverage. There were frequent delays for trains and one shutdown for lightning before operations were completed at 6:05 a.m. on Thursday, October 8. The railroad switched the cars and prepared for shipment of the full cars to Oklahoma City at 1:00 p.m. on October 8. Barry Enix, Charlie McDonald, and Stan Polwort left the area on October 8, and I stayed an additional day to wrap up the event and recognize the local responders.

The following are some observations from the responding team:

1. The CTIRP Drill that was held shortly before the event helped the team a great deal. Because the drill and the incident contained similar situations, the team was better prepared to respond to the actual event.
2. The CTIRP vehicle provided the team with the appropriate equipment for the response. Knowing that the team had the right equipment for handling emergency scenarios made us feel more comfortable with our response. Having that equipment on the vehicle allowed us to respond quickly and professionally.
3. Having public relations personnel on the site proved to be a real asset. Kerry Gregg assisted in the preparation of the press statement and interacted with other agencies to help ensure a flow of information to the public. His presence allowed the team to concentrate on the incident.

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4. The training for CTIRP responders proved quite helpful. During the course of the event, the team members were drawing upon their experiences at Tank Car School and Ammerman Media Training. Without that training, the team could not have responded to this event in as effective a manner.
5. While travelling to the event, and until Kerry Gregg arrived, the team had little communication with the scene or plant management. A cellular telephone for the CTIRP vehicle would have allowed the team to have additional information while in route, and to communicate with personnel on the scene.
6. As an item for future reference, it should be noted that it took longer to transfer from the 31M gallon cars into the 48M gallon (jumbo) cars as opposed to transfers between cars of similar size.

In addition to the previous summary, the following attachments are included to provide more information about this event:

- Attachment A - Map of the site
- Attachment B - List of cars
- Attachment C - Newspaper articles
- Attachment D - Chronology of events

The following persons should be recognized for their contributions to this response: Charlie McDonald, Barry Enix, Stan Polwort, and Kerry Gregg for responding to the scene and providing professional assistance; Pete Markey, Archie Fruge, and others at the VCM Plant provided information and resources to the response team; the Community Relations group for preparing the "if-asked" statement; Keith Fogg for his advice on transfer safety; Mike Kerlegon and his group for arranging for the prompt delivery of empty cars to the site; and the people of KCS, Hulcher, and OHM, as well as the emergency responders from various agencies who helped the incident run smoothly and safely.

M. D. Lunsford

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cc: PEM, JEB