

AICHE's Center for Chemical Process Safety republished the attached safety message. It will be 35 years since the famous Flixborough tragedy, and this is a timely reminder of the need to carefully monitor temporary modifications for process implications.

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Process Safety Beacon Special Issue

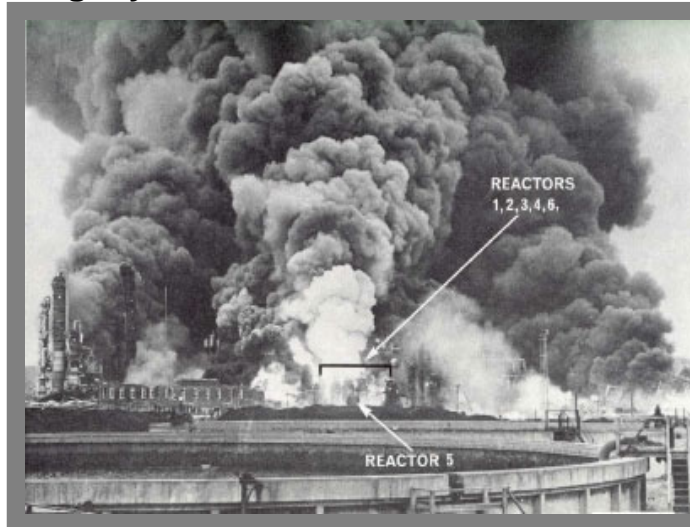
<http://www.aiche.org/ccps/safetybeacon.htm>

Messages for Manufacturing Personnel

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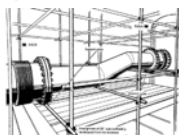
Flixborough — In June 2009 it will be 35 Years since the tragedy...

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What Happened?

One of the six reactors in series needed repairs. To minimize downtime, it was decided to bypass that one reactor and repair it off line. A temporary bypass line was installed using a pipe with an expansion bellows on each end and supported by scaffolding. Because of the rush to resume production, the new bypass was not tested prior to start up nor were engineering standards or manufacturer's recommendations considered.



Approximately three months later, the expansion bellows in the bypass line failed and released an estimated 30 tons of flammable cyclohexane. The resultant vapor cloud ignited killing 28 people and injuring 89 more. The entire plant was destroyed and hundreds of homes and stores were damaged.

See the Chemical Safety Board web site:
http://www.csb.gov/safety_publications/docs/moc082801.pdf for MOC related accidents.

PSID Sponsors see:

Free Search—Management of Change

Why this Happened

The temporary modification was not adequately reviewed for potential adverse consequences!

- ☛ The temporary bypass was made with two bends in it because the nozzles on the two tanks were at different levels. The impact of internal forces and flow stresses were not considered on the expansion bellows.
- ☛ Expansion bellows were left in place on each end of the bypass line. The suitability of this design and manufacturer's recommendations were not considered.
- ☛ The weight of the temporary bypass was not securely supported—it was simply placed on scaffolding. The amount of movement and the effect of that movement on the bellows were not considered.

What You Can Do

- Always follow your company's Management of Change (MOC) procedure. *Remember, temporary changes demand the same rigorous review as do permanent changes.* If you do not utilize a MOC procedure, discuss the value it could provide to your facility.
- Make changes only after thorough hazard reviews have been conducted and approved by qualified experts.
- Use good engineering practices and manufacturer's recommendations.

Evaluate Every change, even Temporary ones—for Expected and Unexpected Consequences