Process Safety Beacon
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Messages for Manufacturing Personnel
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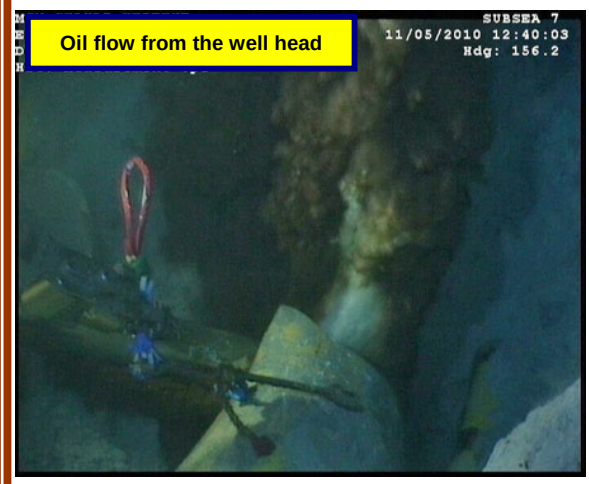
Early lessons from a tragedy

August 2010


The *Deepwater Horizon* fire


The oil spill from space on May 24, 2010



Oil flow from the well head

On April 20, 2010 an explosion on the *Deepwater Horizon* drilling rig, operating in the Gulf of Mexico off of the coast of Louisiana, killed 11 workers and injured 17 others. Approximately 36 hours later the rig sank. The resulting oil spill from the damaged well head is the largest in United States history. This incident has been a major news story throughout the world. As this Beacon is being written, oil continues to leak from the well. It is too soon to know the specific causes of this incident, and there will be a number of investigations in the months ahead. However, it is not too early to think about what we can all learn about the importance of understanding what can go wrong in our own plants, and how we can be better prepared to respond to an emergency. Emergency procedures and equipment are not used very often – after all, emergencies are rare events! But, they can happen, and so we must always ensure that we understand how to recognize warning signs of an incident, know how to be sure that emergency equipment is in good working order, and frequently practice emergency procedures.

What can you do?

- Find out and understand the worst things that can go wrong in your plant.
- Learn to recognize warning signs of a potential major incident.
- Make sure that you know your role in preventing a major incident if you observe any of its warning signs.
- Know how to maintain equipment intended to protect against major incidents in your plant.
- Familiarize yourself with critical procedures intended to protect against major incidents in your plant.
- Know what to do after a major incident, both to protect yourself and others, and to minimize damage.
- Ensure there are frequent emergency drills and practice of emergency procedures at your plant, so you are familiar with what to do in a real incident.

Do you know how to respond to an emergency in your plant?

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