Chemical process safety was not a major public concern prior to 1984. As far as chemical hazards were concerned, public fears focused on disease (cancer) and environmental degradation. Even a series of major process incident tragedies did not translate into widespread public concerns about major incidents in chemical plants that might disastrously affect the public. This situation changed completely after the December 1984 disaster at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal. Not only was the public's confidence in the chemical industry shaken, the chemical industry itself questioned whether its provisions for protection against major incidents were adequate.

The recognition of the need for technical advances and implementation of management systems led to a number of initiatives by various stakeholders throughout the world. Governments and local authorities throughout the world initiated regulatory regimes. Has all that has resulted from the legacy of Bhopal reduced the frequency and severity of incidents? How can we answer this question? As we move into more and more globalization and other complexities what are the challenges we must address? According to the authors, some of these challenges are widespread dissemination and sharing of lessons learned, risk migration because of globalization, changing workforce, and breakthroughs in emerging areas in process safety.