Lessons for Leaders: *Learning from Tragedy*

**CAPTAIN James J. Colgary USN (Retired)**

*Nuclear Energy Institute*

---

**Abstract:**

Process safety incidents can lead to major accidents with catastrophic consequences. This seemingly simple and obvious statement does, unfortunately, get overlooked. Tragic examples are all around us in the form of systems failures, oil spills, explosions, chemical fires and the list goes on.

A disastrous process safety accident occurred at the refinery at Texas City, Texas on March 5, 2005. As the result of this accident that left 15 dead and over 170 injured, a safety panel was formed to investigate the effectiveness of BP’s corporate oversight of safety management systems and its corporate safety culture. Made up from experts from all backgrounds, this panel was tasked with giving a thorough, independent, and credible assessment of the accident. What the panel found, however, was not only specific to BP but rather broad lessons that are applicable across all process industries. Most importantly they found that ensuring process safety includes everyone in the organization: every worker, every contractor, every supervisor, every manager, and each and every leader.

The presentation will focus on the BP U.S. Refineries Independent Safety Review Panel’s findings regarding the refinery accident at Texas City as a starting point. Extracted from the findings are the clear and concise lessons for leaders of all process industries.