FACILITY SITING, RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Offsite consequences from an accident are always of concern to facilities that handle hazardous chemicals. These concerns become magnified when communities encroach on existing facilities or new facilities break ground near existing communities. A buffer zone between the facility and the community is one of the most effective controls for reducing the potential of offsite consequences. This paper will consider four case studies of how different facility operators responded to the challenge posed by a small (or shrinking) buffer zone between the facility and the community. Three of these cases were successful; one case was a failure.

In two of the case studies, encroachment by the local communities reduced the safe buffer around existing and established facilities resulting in concerns for community safety resulting from potential accidents. The two other case studies consider the problems inherent in building an industrial facility in close proximity to residential developments. One case study illustrates how good engineering practices coupled with a good community relations program can result in a favorable response from the community following an accident at the facility. The final case study exemplifies what can go wrong when the community perceives inadequate engineering practices at a facility.