

Speech by Dr A Chockalingam, Chairman SCIC
At the SCIC Responsible Care Process Safety Conference
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Distinguished Guests, Colleagues of the Chemical Industry, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I would like to welcome all participants to this Responsible Care Conference on Process Safety. I am very pleased to see the strong interest in Process Safety, a subject very close to my heart. Responsible Care is an industry initiative committed to manage all activities to ensure preservation of the environment, protection of the health and safety of employees and the community and a standard of performance the public has the right to expect.

Within Singapore, The Singapore Chemical Industry Council promotes the practice of Responsible Care by getting its members to sign up as Responsible care signatories, conducting seminars on workshops to share best practices and by acknowledging outstanding performers by means of its annual Responsible Care awards.

At the national level, the Ministry of Manpower has set up the Workplace Safety & Health Council in April 2008 to raise WSH standards in Singapore to achieve one of the best safety records in the world and to substantially reduce the national fatality rate to less than 1.8 per 100,000 workers by 2018. Traditionally the chemical sector enjoys much better safety performance than the national average. However, since 2007, number of accidents with often multiple fatalities in the chemical sector has been increasing. Occupational safety hazards such as slips, trips and falls affect individual workers per incident. Process safety incidents on the other hand can give rise to major accidents involving the release of potentially dangerous flammable or toxic materials and can have catastrophic effects and can result in multiple injuries and fatalities, as well as substantial economic, property, and environmental damage within the worksite or the community outside the fence. This has brought about the recent formation of a separate industry committee for the chemical sector under WSHC.

The widely publicized BP Texas explosion incident in March 2005, which resulted in 15 workers killed and more than 170 injured again highlights the importance of process safety to prevent similar incident from happening. Many subsequent investigations and reports of the BP Texas incident showed that the root causes of the incident rest on safety culture, process safety and its management. We can say that the major incidents in the refining, petrochemical and chemical industry can be attributed to lapses in process safety management, most with huge financial consequences and some even with loss of life. Seveso, Bhopal, Longford, Flixborough are a few examples.

Process Safety is one of the key codes in Responsible Care aimed at the systematic prevention of chemical releases, fire, explosion and environmental degradation, especially those incidents, which could result in personal injury or health effects. The code provides guidance as well as a means to measure continual improvement in the management of process safety in manufacturing.

Process safety management in a manufacturing facility involves the prevention of leaks, spills, equipment malfunctions, over-pressures, excessive temperatures, corrosion, metal fatigue, and other similar loss of containment conditions which could result in fire or explosive. Process safety programs focus on the design and engineering of facilities, hazard assessments, fire safety reviews, pre start up safety reviews, management of change, timely inspection, testing and maintenance of equipment, effective alarms and alarm management systems, effective process control, procedures, training of personnel, and human factors. The facility should also operate within its agreed operating limit. The systems and procedures should be periodically reviewed.

Each of us here has a moral responsibility to ensure that process safety management systems at our sites are implemented properly and religiously followed. We should also strive for continuous improvement.

I hope you will benefit from the experiences which the experts will share you today and strive for excellence at your worksites.

Thank you.