

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council

www.pasadenacac.org

Summary of Thursday, March 24, 2016 Meeting

PCAC Visits OxyVinyls Emergency Operations Center And Learns How Plants Communicate With Community In A Significant Industrial Event

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council (PCAC) members and the group's most frequent visitors as well as several San Jacinto College Process Technology students took part in a meeting and tour on March 24, 2016 focused on the communications with the community that occur if a plant has a significant industrial event. The meeting was hosted by the Oxy Vinyls Pasadena plant but held at the Oxy Vinyls Battleground Plant. Plant manager Paul Thomas and Assistant Plant Manager Carl Bronold welcomed the participants. After dinner and an overview of the topic provided by Oxy Vinyls' Health, Safety, and Security Manager, Michael Shirey, attendees were bused to the Oxy Vinyls Deer Park plant to tour the Emergency Operations Center that serves the 5 local Oxy Vinyls plants.

OxyVinyls produces polyvinyl chloride resins, chlorine, and caustic soda, which are used in plastics, pharmaceuticals, and water treatment. As a member of East Harris County Manufacturers Association (EHCMA), OxyVinyls follows protocols developed collaboratively by local industry and local government more than a decade ago and laid out in a *Community Emergency Communications (CEC) Handbook* used by both.

The protocols define levels of industrial events for which plants notify the agencies within affected cities or Harris County that are responsible for emergency management. In Pasadena, that is the Office of Emergency Management.

Level I Courtesy Message events are contained within a facility but may be noticeable to the public. Notifying the responsible agency as a courtesy gives agency staff facts to share if they begin receiving calls from residents. A Level III Warning event is one in which the community is impacted. This could be a road closure due to a plant incident but it also could be a release in which the plant recommends that the city call for a shelter in place. In between Level I Courtesy Message and Level III Warning is a Level II Watch. In a Watch, the plant notifies the responsible agencies that an event *may* impact the public so the agencies are on alert in case the status changes.

Like other local plants, OxyVinyls subscribes to e-Notify, a computerized system chosen by area Local Emergency Planning Committees to have plants make notifications quickly and easily to

any affected jurisdictions. Shirey showed attendees examples of an e-Notify message and the kind of information a plant could provide the responsible agency.

The CEC protocols also call for industry to post a courtesy message for the public on the EHCMA CAER Line. Anyone may phone the CAER Line (281-476-2237) when there is a noticeable industry event to see if there is information about it. The message will also be found at www.ehcma.org/caerline. The CAER Line is not a community warning system, but it is a good resource for those who, for example, see smoke or flames at a plant. At their next meeting, PCAC members will visit the City of Pasadena Emergency Operations Center and learn what the city does when a plant notifies them of a significant industrial event.