

Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council

Plant Security I: Overview of Security in Local Industry

April 22, 2025

The 315th meeting of the Pasadena Citizens' Advisory Council (PCAC) was held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at the Log Cabin in RYSS Stem Academy, 1062 Fairmont Parkway. Two speakers presented information about plant and port security: Buck Tadlock, a PCAC member, EHS Specialist with NewMarket Corp. (Afton Chemical and Ethyl Corp.), and director of the Houston Ship Channel Security District (HSCSD); and Lt. Steve Twitty, Maritime Tactical Operations Section Lieutenant with Harris County Sheriff's Office. Both shared their unique expertise in keeping plants and the port safe.

Buck Tadlock explained that the Houston Ship Channel Security District (HSCSD) is a public-private partnership focused on enhancing security for the Houston Ship Channel area. Through collaboration with industry, government agencies, and law enforcement, HSCSD strengthens security infrastructure, provides critical training, and funds patrol and monitoring operations. Through the HSCSD, Tadlock said the community and industry are protected from such threats as:

- Terrorist Attacks
- Cybersecurity Threats
- Natural Disasters
- Industrial Accidents
- Piracy & Smuggling
- Insider Threats

Mitigation strategies include:

- Enhanced surveillance, law enforcement collaboration, and emergency preparedness.
- Background checks, access control systems, and organizational culture promoting security awareness.

Security District:

- Uses federal grants for technology and infrastructure.
- Funds law enforcement and emergency preparedness efforts.
- Covers land, water, and air security (vehicles, patrols, CCTV).
- Funds intelligence analysts in Houston and Austin for threat monitoring.

When people think about the Harris County Sheriff's Office, they might not realize how involved the agency is with activities in and around the Port of Houston. Lt. Steve Twitty and the Maritime Tactical Operations Section (MTOS) team handle a range of missions around the Port, which include underwater surveillance and responding to major security threats. Twitty explained the role of the MTOS and brought in a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) to show the group.

Marine Unit Capabilities:

- Operates 5 patrol boats including:
 - 44-ft boat with a positive pressure cabin (protects against chemical exposure).
 - High-speed boats and shallow-water dive platforms.
- Dive Team:
 - 9 full-time public safety divers and 3 on-call divers.
 - Many are commercial dive certified.
 - Supported by 2 team doctors, including a hyperbaric medicine specialist trained at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Lab.
 - Dive team also trains at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Lab.

ROVs (Remotely Operated Vehicles):

- Used for search and recovery, hull inspections, and narcotics detection.
- Deployed before divers to reduce risk.
- ROVs paired with sonar can locate vehicles, bodies, or parasitic smuggling devices attached to ships.

Training & Collaboration:

- Collaborates with the Coast Guard and City of Houston.
- Trains with NASA for high-level dive simulations.
- Played key roles in:
 - Missing persons cases.
 - Tugboat and aircraft crash investigations.
 - Drug smuggling interdictions.