

## SPREADING THE CEA MESSAGE TO HONG KONG

During the summer of 2016 Cochran were asked to provide independent advice and guidance following a reportable accident in Hong Kong. A fireside explosion had occurred in a 20 year old hospital boiler, which fortunately did not result in any injury or worse, but of course could have been prevented. To provide this independent advice Cochran asked Derry Carr (CEA Chairman) to attend site and investigate. The investigation highlighted a number of areas where systems and operation could be improved. As a result, a number of initiatives have been put in place with the Hong Kong government Electrical & Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to try and ensure such potentially dangerous situations cannot recur.

Initially TK Cheung from Cochran (Hong Kong) undertook site surveys of the existing hospital boiler houses to ensure that all safety features were working as prescribed. Then in December a team of engineers from EMSD visited UK to receive training, from Derry, on the principals of Management procedures, Risk assessments, Contractor selection, Control of contractors and Safe systems of work.

In 2017 it is planned for Derry to carry out further Technical Risk Assessment training of engineers locally in Hong Kong, along with Bill Higgins (Cochran Training manager) providing International Boiler Operation Accreditation Scheme training (I-BOAS) for the operators and maintainers.



David Kilpatrick CEA Director said “this is good news, we know that boilers and steam systems can be dangerous if they are managed and operated incorrectly, using operators and managers who may not have received appropriate training. CEA want to promote the safe operation of all boiler plant wherever it is in the world”. Therefore, by opening-up I-BOAS to the world this adds a very different dimension for the members of CEA who are approved Training Providers such as Cochran and eleven other member companies.

The UK now have a very good set of rules, regulations, legislation, inspection and guidance to ensure Pressure Systems are treated with the respect they deserve.

A lot of the lessons learned have been as a result of serious incidents such as the Flixborough disaster mentioned below. Good guidance and regulations are excellent, but I would pose the question “do people in industry actually know about them” in our experience running conferences and workshops I would say that a large proportion of delegates don’t know, and they don’t know what they don’t know until we tell them what they should have already been doing, such as Risk Assessments... Across the UK several companies do offer very good training alongside CEA BOAS accreditation.

One example is Flixborough - June 1974. Killed 28 people and 36 seriously injured, the plant was totally wrecked, never to be rebuilt. 1000 buildings in nearby villages within a mile radius were damaged as were 800 over three miles away.



The Flixborough disaster was an explosion at a chemical plant close to the village of Flixborough, North Lincolnshire. It killed 28 people and seriously injured 36 out of a total of only 72 people on site at the time; from the devastation on site it was clear that

had the explosion happened in normal office hours the casualty figures could have been much higher. A contemporary campaigner on process safety wrote “the shock waves rattled the confidence of every chemical engineer in the country”.

The disaster involved (and may well have been caused by) a hasty modification. Mechanical engineering issues with the modification were overlooked by the managers (chemical engineers) who approved it, and the severity of the potential consequences of its failure was not appreciated.

Flixborough led to widespread public outcry over process plant safety. Together with the passage of the Health and Safety at Work Act in the same year it led to (and is often quoted in justification of) a more systematic approach to process safety in the UK process industries, and – in conjunction with the Seveso disaster and the consequent EU ‘Seveso directives’ – to explicit UK government regulation of plant processing or storing large inventories of hazardous materials, currently (2014) by the control of Major Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH)

*Courtesy of Wikipedia.*

*End January 2017*