

# **Texas City Refinery Incident Case Study**

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## Texas City Refinery Incident

- BP's largest and most complex refinery, employing 1600 and covering 1200 acres
- Explosion and fire at the Isomerization Unit at 1.20pm on March 23, 2005
- 15 fatalities, 170 injured
- Large scale emergency response effort underway swiftly
- Almost immediate TV coverage using helicopters
- Other media on scene within 10 minutes



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**3-5 June 2007 Bayerischer Hof Hotel  
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## Characteristics of a Crisis

- Surprise
- Panic
- Rapid flow of events
- Lack of sufficient information
- Public and government involvement
- Internal conflict and confusion
- Social ramifications
- Intense press scrutiny
- Siege mentality

## Lessons learned

- Access to the scene will be very difficult
- The communications resources required are substantial
- Ensure clarity around reporting fatalities
- Not having background facts –eg, safety and training data – increases pressure
- Information flow is the key to the communications response – be clear on internal process
- “Pier” website assisted in reducing number of external calls and internal information flow

# Pier – Public Information Emergency Response



PIER SYSTEM - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by BP Group Digital Business

Address: https://www.piersystem.com/logon/index.cfm?fuseaction=logon.frameset

**BP America**  
Texas City Response Site - #946

Home | Inquiries | Content | Contacts | Reporting | Administration

**Inquiry Status**

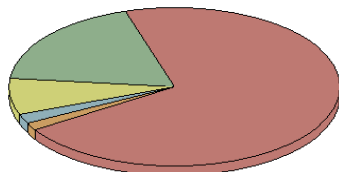
Type	Unanswered	Answered	Total	
Media	2	193	195	<a href="#">edit</a>
Government Officials	0	4	4	<a href="#">edit</a>
Community	3	48	51	<a href="#">edit</a>
Responding Agencies	0	7	7	<a href="#">edit</a>
BP Internal	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Employee	0	19	19	<a href="#">edit</a>

**Unanswered Inquiries**

Topic	Type	Contact	Date v
BP COMMITMENT	Community	JOE ZRNCHIK	22-Apr-05 09:22 PM
BP COMMITMENT	Community	JOE ZRNCHIK	22-Apr-05 09:21 PM
Unit Safety Verification Checklist	Media	TJ Aulds	12-Apr-05 11:46 AM
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	Media	TJ Aulds	12-Apr-05 11:34 AM
Octane Boosters	Community	Matt Westwood	03-Apr-05 09:22 PM

**Inquiries by Database**

Media	195(71%)
Community	51(18%)
Employee	19(7%)
Responding Agencies	7(3%)
Government Officials	4(1%)
BP Internal	0(0%)



PIER SYSTEM - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by BP Group Digital Business

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**BP Crown Landing**  
Crown Landing Informational Website - #569

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**Document Status**

Document Type	Unposted	Posted	Archived	
About Us	0	4	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Legal Information	0	2	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Crown Landing	1	34	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Resource Appendices (H)	0	62	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
About LNG	0	13	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Press Releases	2	14	6	<a href="#">edit</a>
Notifications (H)	1	9	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Community Info	0	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Community Events	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Community Newsletter	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Project Info	0	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Safety and Shipping	3	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Re-gas Terminals	1	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Regulatory Affairs	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Background	1	17	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
LNG Video	1	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Internal Information	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Messages (I)	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Meeting Minutes (I)	5	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Site User Guides (I)	0	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Site Design Information (I)	0	0	0	<a href="#">edit</a>
Images for Documents (I)	1	1	0	<a href="#">edit</a>

**Posted Documents**

- Enquiry management system helps keep track of responses
- If-asked 'library'
- Statement approval & collaboration, document tracking, enquiry and issue statistics

## Lessons learned

- Web overtakes other media for news source
- Have a strict shift system – make people go home
- Technology helps and hinders – the response is dependent upon individuals
- Have a single freephone number for HR issues and ensure it is being answered



## Lessons learned

- You will get credit for admitting your mistake
  - So far, BP has handled the emergency openly and well. It will need to show that it does not compromise safety to save investment and that Texas City is not the company's true face. (Times, 25 March 2005)
  - “We would not be talking to BP at this stage if I did not think that they were recognizing the full magnitude of the injury and damage that they have caused,” said Houston lawyer Richard Mithoff
  - “They are not handling this in the usual way,” said Jamail, who represents 13 injured or killed workers. “They are very open and understanding and have acknowledged the seriousness of it. They really are trying to compensate the workers and the survivors.”

## Lessons learned

- Make good use of senior management
  - In moving swiftly, Lord Browne has avoided the negative fall-out that hit ExxonMobil when its tanker ran aground in Alaska. Many bristled at the perceived arrogant tone of ExxonMobil whose chairman left subordinates to deal with the crisis. In contrast, Lord Browne has been suitably humble. (FT, 26 March 2005)
- Make sure you use the right terminology
  - “In speaking about the report, we have sometimes described the immediate critical factors as root causes,” BP Products North America, the subsidiary which operates the refinery, said in a statement. “This has caused some confusion, for which we apologise.”