



## **CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL TO LA PORTE INDUSTRY**

### **Energy Transfer Pipeline Fire**

At this meeting, La Porte Emergency Management was invited to discuss the city's experience during Energy Transfer Pipeline fire that occurred on September 16<sup>th</sup>, including details of the emergency response, lessons learned, and an overview of pipelines in the area. The Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management was asked to outline the county's response and address questions from industrial facilities. Harris County Pollution Control was requested to describe the air monitoring conducted and inform the public on how to track the results.

### **City of La Porte**

Johnny Morales, the City of La Porte's Emergency Management Coordinator, began his presentation by playing audio from the radio dispatch alerting responders to the incident, followed by overview of the events. At approximately 9:55 AM on Monday, September 16, La Porte's Emergency Communications Center received a report of a major accident involving an explosion near Walmart. A La Porte Fire Marshall identified the blaze and confirmed to dispatch that it was located along a pipeline corridor.

The Communications Center immediately notified the Emergency Management Coordinator, and the Fire Chief called again and reported visible flames and requested activation of the Emergency Operation Center (EOC). The Fire Department quickly classified the event as a pipeline fire. Response efforts, supported by the Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (OEM) and First Responders, continued for nearly 100 hours. Morales outlined the response objectives and priorities, and said that life safety is always the top priority. Due to the pipeline fire and the identification of the pipeline owner, an evacuation was ordered from Luella to Canada streets, with road closures extending from Luella to Underwood. This evacuation affected approximately 1,500 homes and 30 businesses and remained in place for three days. Notifications were sent through AlertLP, social media, the city's website, and door-to-door communication. La Porte ISD sheltered students at Heritage Elementary and College Park while coordinating with OEM on a release plan. San Jacinto College - Central sheltered in place until speaking with the Emergency Management Center (EMC) and ultimately closed early. Additionally, La Porte and Deer Park Parks & Recreation Departments deployed shuttles to assist stranded community members. The SPORT Facility and Jimmy Burke Center served as reunification centers. La Porte issued a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) and

a Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) within a 1-mile radius to limit aircraft access. The City of La Porte Fire Department worked to protect homes to the west and south of the incident, while Harris County Pollution Control conducted air monitoring. The priority was first to protect life and then to prevent further exposure.

Morales shared details about the pipeline involved, which is owned by Energy Transfer. The 20-inch pipeline stretches 13 miles, with 3 miles located north and 10 miles south of the incident site. It contained liquefied natural gas (LNG) and operated at a pressure of 850-950 PSI. For efficient long-distance transport and storage, natural gas is compressed into a liquid state. Morales said Energy Transfer provided strong support by sending multiple representatives to the Command Post, the La Porte EOC, and the Deer Park EOC. This approach, considered a best practice, helped streamline the flow of information. Although the incident was not due to a process failure, the company provided a public claims number for displaced residents needing temporary housing or assistance with damages and lost belongings.

Morales noted that La Porte did not experience permanent damage to any facilities, and most residents and businesses in the evacuated areas were able to return to their homes and workplaces. For affected homeowners unable to return, lodging was arranged at local hotels. Energy Transfer offered assistance for expenses related to spoiled food, lost wages, lodging, and other needs.

Morales thanked the many assisting agencies, including law enforcement departments, emergency medical services, fire and hazmat teams, emergency management groups, Harris County Pollution Control, CenterPoint, and Energy Transfer. He emphasized that personnel and equipment were effectively deployed as needed, demonstrating a well-coordinated response.

### **Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management**

Brent Conaway, Industrial Liaison from the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HCOHSEM), described their response to the incident. On the morning of the incident, Harris County was notified early about the pipeline fire. Information between the city and county was exchanged throughout the event. With access to a wealth of information, HCOHSEM was able to provide significant support to the city.

Bubba Coxie, an Industrial Liaison with HCOHSEM, provided an overview of the responsibilities of the three industrial liaisons, a team that also includes David Wade. Coxie explained that their primary role is to serve as incident liaisons, acting as a bridge between the city and county to close communication gaps outside city boundaries. They facilitate information exchange and provide support to the city as needed.

During incidents, the liaisons report to the city's Emergency Management Center (EMC). Their scope of work extends beyond industrial incidents, covering a broad range of emergencies. While the cities of La Porte and Deer Park manage incidents within their boundaries, Harris County oversees unincorporated areas outside those limits. Industrial liaisons play a key role by setting up Zoom calls, self-deploying, and mobilizing resources such as Harris County Hazmat,

Harris County Pollution Control, and other county assets as needed. Coordinating with local agencies during an incident typically takes at least an hour.

### **Harris County Pollution Control**

Herman Rogers, Harris County Pollution Control, described their actions during the pipeline fire. Rogers said they established a perimeter around the fire and monitored air quality throughout the event. In addition to using existing Community Air Monitoring Program (CAMP) monitors in the area, they deployed personnel to conduct manual air monitoring. CAMP monitors, funded by the EPA, are set up across Harris County to track particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and weather elements such as wind speed and direction. The public can visit the [Harris County Pollution Control website](#) to view current air quality data or look up previous events.

The CAC is a forum for candid and constructive dialogue between those who live or work in La Porte, Morgan's Point, and Shoreacres and the managers of 43 chemical plants in La Porte. The CAC welcomes visitors. It meets again on Tuesday, January 7 at 6:00 p.m. to learn about Plant Security. Contact [info@laportecac.org](mailto:info@laportecac.org) if you wish to attend. The CAC shares information about its meetings and presentations at [www.laportecac.org](http://www.laportecac.org).