Ammonia Safety Day Celebrates Milestones

The Salinas Valley Ammonia Safety Day, a collaboration between industry, government and academia, celebrated its 21st year of providing safety training to industry, emergency responders and regulators. The event, held last month at the Steinbeck Center for Arts and Culture, marked a milestone in its continuing partnership with Hartnell College.

“The safest people are the best trained,” said Bruce Welden, Supervisor of Hazardous Materials Management Services in the Environmental Health Bureau of the Monterey County Health Department. “The biggest single safety factor around ammonia units is well-trained users and this year we have Hartnell College on the threshold of creating training courses in refrigeration, which raises awareness of the vocational trades with their good-paying jobs.”

Attendees view demonstrations in the special ammonia safety training systems trailer.
Welden, who was one of the founders of Ammonia Safety Day, is pleased to see the evolution of this program from industry event to core curriculum. The Environmental Health Bureau continues to play an important role in supporting this training event.

At the conference, Hartnell College officials laid out the importance of having highly trained workers inside processing plants who can maintain ammonia tanks and react skillfully in the event of an ammonia leak. Speaking before the event’s approximately 600 attendees, Dr. Zahi Atallah, Dean of Advanced Technology and Susan Pheasant, Director of the Agriculture, Business & Technology Institute, emphasized that the mission of the Institute is to prepare skilled professionals for the California agricultural industry.

“We’ve been working with those in this industry so, as a whole, the industry can have a say in the education of the people they hire,” Pheasant said.

While there is no ‘done deal’ yet, Pheasant said the college is looking at a program in conjunction with the Refrigerating Engineers & Technicians Association, which credentials ammonia system technicians. Under consideration is an accredited technician program to train students on maintenance, installation and, most importantly, safety of ammonia refrigeration systems.

Some very good news for one of Monterey County’s 17 libraries, which has been closed since 2010.

The County has received a $200,000 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant for the San Lucas Library rebuilding project. The grant will help with the clean-up of the library site.
“We are grateful to the Public Works staff who worked so hard to make this grant a reality,” says County Librarian Jayanti Addleman. “This grant will be a huge boost for the project.”

The San Lucas Library building closed for what originally started as a simple $150,000 refurbishing project funded by the Board of Supervisors, but has since grown into a full-scale rebuild. The original building was demolished and work is being done to clean up the location to make way to build a silver-level LEED certified building. The new library will be a beautiful community center for the small community of San Lucas and will include a quiet study area, computers, Wi-Fi and high speed internet, an outdoor activity space and a Sheriff's Field Office.

Monterey County Free Libraries would like to acknowledge the combined efforts of many individuals and local organizations in moving forward the renovation of this very important community asset, including a major donation from the Sarmento Family, a large grant from the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, the sale of the building and site for $1 by the San Lucas School District, a $150,000 Community Development Block Grant and the assistance from Public Works for this latest EPA grant.

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**Health Department Organizes Walk Your Child to School Events**

‘Walk Your Child to School Day’ events took place at schools in Monterey County last month, bringing parents and children together for a mass walk.

The walking events were organized by the Monterey County Health Department in partnership with the Child Health and Disabilities Program Safe Routes to School grant and in collaboration with the Network for a Healthy California.
Walkers arrive at Highland Elementary School and are treated to a snack and prize for taking part in the walking event (above). Students, parents and community leaders hit the pavement, walking to Marina Vista Elementary School (right).

“Many parents are aware that walking or riding a bicycle to school can increase physical activity and improve their children's health” said Dr. Edward Moreno, Monterey County Health Officer. “Creating safe routes to school can reassure parents and encourage children to walk or bike more often.”

Walk to School Day events build connections between families, schools and the broader community and raise awareness of a variety of important issues:

- The need for safer routes for walking and bicycling
- The importance of increasing physical activity among children
- Pedestrian safety
- Traffic congestion
- Concern for the environment

Ord Terrance, Martin Luther King Jr., Marina Vista and Highland Elementary schools all hosted walking events involving students, parents and community leaders.