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MEETING
PAPER



The "Brenham Explosion" and the Focus on the Safety of Underground Hydrocarbon Storage

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ABSTRACT

The destructive explosion at the site of a salt dome storage facility operated by Seminole Pipeline Company near Brenham, Texas on April 7, 1992, sent shock waves through the underground hydrocarbon storage (UHS) industry. Not only was the explosion a major news item because of the death and destruction, but it invoked public concern and regulatory scrutiny of the UHS industry. Initially, investigation and understanding the circumstances that caused the explosion were vital. Although the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) conducted a lengthy investigation, the Railroad Commission (RRC) quickly determined the cause and offered its conclusions to the public. The RRC initiated a survey of the safety devices and methods employed at all UHS facilities in the State. The drafting of rules to enhance the safety of UHS facilities began. The industry was supportive of the effort while emphasizing the safety of such operations. Rulemaking culminated with the adoption of three rules and their implementation on January 1, 1994. The rules have been lauded as the standard for state regulation. The standards set by these regulations