

# SECTION 1

## HISTORY OF CVECO

### Chemical Valley Emergency Coordinating Organization

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## **1. THE CHEMICAL VALLEY EMERGENCY "TRAFFIC CONTROL" COMMITTEE**

- 1.1 At 10:30 p.m. Sunday, May 6, 1951, an explosion and fire occurred at the Butadiene Extraction Unit, Polymer Corporation Limited. The explosion was said to have been heard as far away as London and Detroit. Flames leaped high in the air, and the fire was very difficult to handle. Hours passed before it was brought under control and extinguished.
- 1.2 Following the explosion, a large number of persons drove to the scene. Vehicles parked on both sides of Highway 40, across from Polymer and the emergency area. Curious spectators leaned against the perimeter fence, watching, with no regard for their own safety, or the safety of others. Several were noticed smoking.
- 1.3 Much credit is due Polymer's Fire Department and to all their personnel. They contained the emergency, preventing further explosions, which would have resulted in greater damage to people and property.
- 1.4 Within a day or two following this emergency, the management of Polymer Corporation Limited, Imperial Oil Limited and Dow Chemical of Canada Limited, met and reviewed what had occurred. It was agreed that an overall plan needed to be developed which would prevent similar future incidents. Plant management's also agreed to appoint personnel to a unifying committee, which became known as the "Chemical Valley Emergency Traffic Control Committee".
- 1.5 The first meeting of that committee was held shortly thereafter, at Polymer, with the following persons present:
  - Mr. John Gallo, Chief Security Officer, Polymer Corporation Ltd.
  - Mr. Samuel G. Stokes, Chief Security Officer, Imperial Oil Ltd.
  - Mr. Clayton Taylor, Chief Security Officer, Dow Chemical of Canada.

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## **1. THE CHEMICAL VALLEY EMERGENCY “TRAFFIC CONTROL” COMMITTEE Continued**

- 1.6 At that meeting, it was realized that any emergency plan would require the co-operation and participation of the Sarnia Police Department. Without any hesitation, following discussion, the Chief of Police appointed Sergeant Ernest W. Duffield as his representative to work with industry in formulating an emergency plan. After several more meetings, the plan developed by the committee was approved by the management of the three companies.
- 1.7 At the Fortieth anniversary of CVECO, in May, 1991, both Mr. Taylor and Mr. Duffield were able to be present and to be honoured for their pioneering work.

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## **2. THE CHEMICAL VALLEY “INDUSTRIAL MUTUAL FIRE AID” ORGANIZATION:**

- 2.1 This organization was also formed in 1951. Its members were all companies, then and later, that had Fire Departments, together with the City of Sarnia Fire Department.
- 2.2 Believed to be the first industrial mutual aid organization in Ontario, it mirrored similar movements of co-operation and integration of municipal fire department personnel and equipment in response to Cold War concerns.

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### **3. THE CHEMICAL VALLEY “EMERGENCY CONTROL” ORGANIZATION:**

- 3.1 The two organizations, traffic control and firefighting, continued separate development for twenty years. In 1971, Chief Cliff Hansen, of the Sarnia Fire Department became Chair of both organizations, and they became amalgamated under one Executive.
- 3.2 From a four-member beginning, CVECO has grown to include more than fifty government, utility, industrial and business groups, in both Ontario and Michigan.
- 3.3 The original emergency plan has been updated and extended to cover all of the Chemical Valley, from Sarnia to Sombra now St. Clair Township. It has been tested annually, in field exercises known as the Sarnia Area Disaster Simulation, since 1980.

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### **4. THE CHEMICAL VALLEY “EMERGENCY CO-ORDINATING” ORGANIZATION:**

- 4.1 CVECO’s initials have remained unchanged since its formation, but the second “C” has represented “Co-ordinating”, rather than “Control” since municipal governments were assigned legal control of emergencies in the aftermath of the Mississauga train derailment of 1979. It has a proud record of achievement, and has been the inspiration for many similar organizations, around the world, to the present day.
- 4.2 In 1986, CVECO became the emergency response half of Community Awareness Emergency Response (CAER). It has lent history, perspective and leadership to the larger organization in the years that have followed.

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## 5. A FEW ACHIEVEMENTS:

- 5.1 CVECO co-operated in the establishment of the Lambton County Industrial Fire School, the Sarnia General Hospital burn care unit, and constantly-evolving radio communication networks including, most recently, a tactical on-scene emergency fire-fighting channel.
- 5.2 It funded the first mobile Command Post (a old city bus), and continues to support the latest vehicle. Over a period of years, it developed a unique municipal/industrial incident command structure and has successfully handled a wide range of emergencies.
- 5.3 Traffic control continues to be the important function it was at the beginning. Since 1996, the establishment of eleven barricade lockers, which allow for the rapid closing off of traffic routes, has aided it. The establishment and maintenance of marked emergency routes is a constant visual reminder of CVECO's place in the community.
- 5.4 In 2001, CAER took part in the obtaining of ten new sirens for the City of Sarnia and the north section of St. Clair Township.
- 5.5 Also in 2001 a committee was formed to review our current Incident Command structure. Revisions were made to bring the CVECO structure in line with the system used by the Lambton County mutual aid organization.  
The system is now considered to be an Incident "Management" System.
- 5.6 Terminology was revised and minimum requirements for emergency procedures as it relates to initiating CVECO codes were also established. Each CVECO member is required to have an Industrial Emergency Site Manager, a on-scene Incident Commander and a Technical Advisor who will work in a "unified command system" with any municipal and/or mutual aid responders.
- 5.7 In 2003 the CVECO manual was revised to meet the constant changes within our CVECO/CAER organization