

## Book Reviews

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*Love Canal: The Social Construction of Disaster*, by M.R. Fowlkes and P.Y. Miller, Smith College, prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, 500 C St., S.W., Washington, DC 20472, U.S.A., October 1982, 148 pages, paperbound, available from FEMA at above address.

Although Love Canal is no longer the popular subject of the printing and electronic media it was a few years ago, the social consequences remain. Although it was never officially declared a “disaster” in the legal sense of the word, the Love Canal question, which was first independently investigated in 1976 because it was believed a possible source of toxic chemical contamination of Lake Ontario, eventually involved the potentially permanent relocation of 794 families (some refused to re-locate), and left many unresolved questions as to the seriousness of the exposure of residents of the area.

This study approaches the toxic waste question as a behavioral phenomenon, and attempts to fill a gap in scientific understanding of individual and family response to the uncertainty and ambiguity of slowly developing events. The report begins with a history of the Love Canal community and the background to the toxic waste emergency. The investigators invited a number of residents to participate in an in-depth interview of approximately two hours duration; 63 such interviews were completed, and the results tabulated and studied. The interviews included routine demographic data, residential history at Love Canal, awareness and assessment of chemical presence and migration, perceptions of health as related to the presence of chemical wastes, sources of official information and perceptions of government and grass-roots leadership, assignment of blame and responsibility, factors in relocation decisions, and perceptions of present and future well-being. Each interview concluded with an invitation to the respondent to add to or elaborate on any aspect of the subject.

As would be expected, the interviews reveal much concern over the inability of residents to know exactly what was involved, to what extent they were in difficulty, and who was responsible. Recommendations include that concerns and inquiries of individual residents be heeded and investigated promptly, with a view to identifying and effectively containing any contamination and risk, and the complainants be informed promptly of the results of such studies. The location of all present and former chemical dump sites and their contents should be a matter of public record.

Despite the known prevalence of chemical dumps, there is widespread belief among former Love Canal residents that, through this situation, officials and experts at all levels have learned techniques for manipulating citizens that will preclude the emergence of another Love Canal event. The political manipulation of citizens may effectively forestall such situations in the fu-

ture, but it will not eliminate them. Nevertheless, delaying tactics will render such incidents more costly — socially, politically, and economically — than would otherwise be the case.

This report should be required reading for any corporate or governmental official who feels that Love Canal was a short-lived blip on the screen — it clearly shows that the scientific/health/social interface can be very cloudy if not handled properly from the viewpoint of the persons involved.

H.H. FAWCETT

*Management of Safety: Concepts and Tasks (A Unified Approach to Achieve Safety and Quality)*, by N.S. Sreenivasan, Works Manager, IDL Chemicals Limited, P.O. Sonaparbat, Rourkela 769016, Orissa, India, 136 pages, paperback, 1984; available from Mr. Sreenivasan at above address.

Perhaps an explosive manufacturing facility is the ultimate proving ground of effective management, since quality control and safety are so closely interrelated, and must be at a high level if plant and personnel are to survive. As works manager of an explosive plant, the author of this "safety guide" has organized both his personal as well as company philosophy on "safety" as an integral part of a well-managed business. Beginning with the stated company philosophy on excellence in quality and safety, and its social philosophy, expressing the need not only to comply with laws but to go beyond (such as including the workers' family as the focal point by way of introducing regular diagnostic health checks), the booklet outlines the general basic approaches to safety management, pointing out that the gap between precept and practice is often too wide, and that "safety", to be successful, must be integrated into the system at every step from top management to the operator at the work site.

"Management of Safety: An Interview", and "Basic Concepts of Safety" present fundamentals in an outline, and stress that many aspects are frequently overlooked in the era of laws and regulations, which, like band-aids, were put in place to control specific, rather than general problems. Each functional group in the plant must have clear guidelines which are outlined as to their safety activities, including design, research and development, purchase and stores, manufacturing, maintenance, quality control, personnel, marketing and consumer service, as well as the plant safety office.

"Safety Policy and Objectives" outlines basic principles which guide the actions of a company. The chapter on manuals on safety procedure with specific topics which should be addressed is excellent. Examples are shown of the procedure for introduction of a new chemical into the operation, a flame/work permit system, a job-preparation and job-sequencing procedure, and dismantling/erection procedures.

In a chapter on operator control, which is the heart of the booklet, the difference between "control of safety by the operator" and "controlling the