

Managing Safety in the Chemical Laboratory, by J.P. Dux and R.F. Stalzer, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, NY, 1988, ISBN 0-442-21869-9, 154 pp., US \$28.95.

As I have stated before in previous reviews, it is rare that I read a technical book from cover to cover. Often they are too lengthy; more often they are too complex and boring. This book is an exception! It is easy to read, down to earth, interesting and “chock full” of practical useful information. “Managing Safety in the Chemical Laboratory” is an excellent guide to the topic of safety in industrial and academic laboratories.

The authors note that it is people and not systems (or equipment) that are the cause of most accidents. The book focuses on managing people and gives advice on why and how to write a safety manual. I often criticize books I review for needless details. This time I wished for more detail. The author gives an outline for a safety manual. I would not have minded seeing 10 or 20 pages of details on the topic so that (being lazy) I (and other readers) could plagiarize parts from these most knowledgeable people.

Other topics covered include:

- Preparing for emergencies
- Personal protection
- Safety in handling hazardous chemicals
- Managing personnel for safety
- Safety in the academic laboratory
- Managing hazardous wastes

There are three appendices dealing with US government regulations and the regulations on handling, storage and cleaning up spills of hazardous chemicals.

On the dust jacket, the publishers have written that “an improved safety record benefits technicians, supervisors and the organization as a whole by strengthening morale and lowering insurance costs.” This book should help one attain that goal. It has certainly given me a better perspective on safety in my own laboratory.

GARY F. BENNETT

Crisis Management: A Casebook, edited by M.T. Charles and J.C.K. Kim, Charles C. Thomas Publishers, Springfield, IL, 1988, ISBN 0-398-05408-8, 186 pp., US \$39.50 (£17.50).

On the dust jacket, the publisher has summarized the book’s contents nicely:

“By developing a sound foundation in emergency management, professionals will be better prepared to deal with natural and man-made disasters. The purpose of this casebook, consequently, is to meet the growing need for educational materials in this area and to provide crisis management case studies which demonstrate the numerous administrative challenges

faced by decision makers. Fourteen major disasters from throughout the United States are discussed including the Love Canal dump site, MGM Grand Hotel fire, Hyatt Skywalk disaster, TWA hijacking, eruption of Mt. St. Helens, Hurricane Frederick and the Coalinga Earthquake. Each case provides management examples in the four recognized management stages — mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery — and conclude with discussion, questions and a list of emergency management resources”.

The case method is a well-established teaching technique in the College of Law and Business Administration, but outside of those fields it is not used much especially in engineering (the reviewer’s area); and in the field of public administration, the authors say the case method is “underutilized”. This is unfortunate given the following quotation:

“The outstanding virtue of the case system is that it is suited for inspiring activity, under realistic conditions, on the part of students. It takes them out of the role of passive absorbers and makes them partners in the joint processing of learning and furthering learning.”

The cases chosen from my perspective — The Love Canal (uncontrolled hazardous waste site), Casa Grande (a hazardous material incident) and Water, Water Everywhere (contaminated wells) were excellent and nicely covered the spectrum of chemical disaster problems. All cases were factually and generally fairly presented.

However, in terms of factual material (i.e. data on amount of contamination of chemicals), the cases were devoid of that. And the overall discussion of the Love Canal case, was too short — admittedly that case could fill (and has done so) whole books.

Finally, the four questions at the end of each chapter were, I feel, too few to adequately explore all the issues involved. Perhaps the teacher’s guide that goes with the text has more questions.

Having made my criticisms, I’ll back off and say that I would like to use the book to teach a course — or at least use the cases dealing with chemical technology in a course of mine. Unfortunately, I would have to learn how to use the case method, but I will wager both my students and I would profit from the exercise.

GARY F. BENNETT

Biotechnology for Degradation of Toxic Chemicals in Hazardous Wastes, edited by R.J. Scholze, E.D. Smith, J.T. Bandy, W.C. Wu and J.V. Basilio, Noyes Data Corp., Park Ridge, NJ, 1988, ISBN 0-8155-1148-5, 697 pp., US \$59.

This book is based on a conference held in Arlington, Virginia, in June, 1986, to assess the usefulness of biotechnology for the treatment of hazardous/toxic wastewaters. Of the 55 papers presented at the conference, 37 are included in these Proceedings, along with the results of a Research Need’s Workshop held