

PLANNING, TEAMWORK RAISES NEW FLARE HIGHER

BY TEXAS CITY TEAM
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A new flare stack near the Ultracracker is soaring higher and higher, thanks to good planning and teamwork.

At this writing, the first six out of 10 sections were in place. Each section is 30 ft. tall, so 180 ft. out of 300 have been erected.

As part of the Atmospheric Blow Down and Flare project (ABF), Flares & Stacks is constructing the tall flare under the direction of the Turnaround Group. Execution Coordinator Chuck Golden praised the teamwork of everyone involved, including the Heavy Equipment Operators.

"We're getting lots of support from the Heavy Equipment Group," Golden said. "They don't just go out and operate cranes. They're also very good at developing the lift plans. We have a three-inch thick three-ring binder that spells out everything from drawings, to weight calculations and the right riggings to make sure everything is in place and done right."

The section components are fabricated off site, assembled on site and then stacked "like the tiers of a wedding cake," Golden said. For the first few levels, the crews mounted carry decks up to 125 feet in the air to guide the sections together. Once past the fourth section, they started using special scaffolding built on the legs of the flare, flying people up in a man basket hoisted by crane.

The project has gone smoothly from a safety perspective, with no recordable injuries. The schedule calls for the flare to be ready for service by the end of June. ■



TOUGHER WAVE OF DRILLS BEGINS AT ARU

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The best way to defuse a crisis is to be ready to handle one. With that in mind, a "live gun drill" was staged last week at the Aromatics Recovery Unit to see how well people near the ARU could respond to an emergency.

"Tier One-and-a-Half is about ready to happen, so we want to make sure we do our pre-evacuation drills of the West Plant," said Glen Borah, shift director and drill leader. "It's a good experience for us to evacuate the unit and to train our contractors and show how important they are to us."

The incident was an upset unit, in which a level control was lost at the ARU. Such an emergency is enough to warrant an evacuation of the unit, as well as others nearby. In this case, that meant the Ultracracker also had to be evacuated. The simulation involved the cooperation of sites throughout the West Plant, especially with road shutdowns and keeping people out of the area.

"The drill went really well," said Daniel Ochoa, board operator at Alky 2, who helps run the drills, along with Dean Alaniz. "The ARU recognized they had a problem. They went ahead and sounded their evacuation. Because the Ultracracker is in such close proximity, they also evacuated."

"The contractors did a very good job of leaving the unit, moving at a safe but good pace to get out of the danger area," Ochoa added. "We still have a ways to go with road closures, vehicle traffic, people recognizing that there is a situation, and that they do need to adhere to EPR 2 policy and what their role is. But for the most part, the drill went as planned, and we will continue to keep doing drills and make the refinery a safer place."

Borah and his crew conducted 106 drills last year, and 11 this year. Many more are planned. The training is a lot tougher than it used to be. Each drill now involves several units at a time – 30 units have participated so far this year – and supervisors get less advance notice of a pending drill.

"As for training, this year they're unannounced," Borah said. "We walk in; we take the supervisor from the unit. We tell him he's got about ten minutes to review with his crew and to evacuate the area, and in this case, it was the West Plant."

"As far as I'm concerned, all went well," Borah continued. "We've got a long way to go. We need a lot more practice to be the best in class for BP." ■

