



U.S. Chemical Safety and
Hazard Investigation Board



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FY 2022 – 2026

Strategic Plan

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A Message from the Chairperson



I am honored to present the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board's (CSB) *FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan* on behalf of the agency's Board and professional staff. Over the last few years, the CSB has faced significant challenges associated with the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, a large backlog in investigative reports, serious attrition among experienced employees, and vacancies on the Board and in key staff positions. Recently, however, as new Board members have taken office, the CSB has been making progress toward addressing these issues, including reducing the report backlog, hiring critical staff, and reducing attrition, in addition to increasing transparency in the agency's operations and making more information accessible to the public, as we strive to protect communities, workers, and the environment from chemical disasters.

The *FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan* will serve as a guide for CSB activities and help the agency focus resources on our important mission. This Plan outlines our priorities as we move forward

to hire and retain more professional staff, increase deployments at chemical incidents, utilize critical information received under the agency's Accidental Release Reporting Rule (ARRR), eliminate the current backlog of investigative reports, and increase transparency and information-sharing, consistent with our charge to issue reports and recommendations aimed at keeping communities, workers, and the environment safe and free from chemical incidents.

The heart of the CSB is our team. Achieving our goals and keeping communities safe depends on the hard work and commitment of our excellent dedicated career professional staff. A key focus over the next five years is to grow, support, and develop our agency team so that we will have an experienced workforce large enough to fulfill the mission with which we have been charged. Because the CSB has experienced such significant attrition in recent years, we must work not only to increase the number of staff focused on the agency's core mission, but also provide the resources, training, and support that the CSB staff needs to ensure the agency's long-term success.

Steve Owens
Chairperson
U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

MISSION, VISION, AND STRATEGIC GOALS

MISSION

Drive chemical safety excellence through independent investigations to protect communities, workers, and the environment.

VISION

A nation free from chemical disasters.



Strategic Goals



Strategic Goal 1

Prevent recurrence of significant chemical incidents through independent investigations.



Strategic Goal 2

Advocate safety and achieve change through recommendations, outreach, and education.



Strategic Goal 3

Create and maintain an engaged, high-performing workforce.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To best serve the public and our stakeholders over the next five years, the CSB envisions a nation that is not only safe from chemical incidents, but free from such incidents to the greatest extent possible. **Our mission is to drive chemical safety excellence through independent investigations to protect communities, workers, and the environment while adhering to our core values.**

We will achieve our mission and our vision by conducting objective, independent investigations that display technical rigor at all stages—from deployment, to report release and follow-up on recommendations, to long-term advocacy and outreach. To support our efforts, we have developed strategic goals to improve our investigations, recommendations, outreach, and CSB human capital.

Specifically, we will review all reported incidents and strategically select ones for investigation that are likely to yield recommendations that will protect both the public at large and a wide range of stakeholders, going beyond just the companies and communities immediately impacted by the incidents.

We also will work with stakeholders from industry, labor, the non-profit sector, Federal, state, and local governments and others, to champion continual improvement in the chemical industry

and disseminate lessons learned as broadly as possible. We will use a variety of tools to convey these messages, including our reports, safety tools, advocacy events, website, social media presence, safety alerts, and our popular safety videos, some of which are available with subtitles in other languages.

Perhaps most importantly, we will work to support our greatest resource—the CSB staff—to champion the same continual improvement that we expect from those involved in our investigations. We will work to increase the size of our workforce by recruiting and retaining additional experienced professionals. We will continue to enhance and streamline our internal processes, performance metrics, and professional development program so that CSB staff may dedicate their time and attention to completing work to protecting communities, workers, and the environment from chemical disasters.

BACKGROUND & LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

The CSB is an independent Federal agency established to investigate incidents and hazards resulting from the production, processing, and handling of chemical substances that can cause death, serious injury, or substantial environmental or property damage. Congress created the CSB as a part of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, but the agency did not commence operations until 1998.



The CSB is headquartered in Washington, DC. The CSB is governed by its Board, which by statute consists of one presidentially appointed Chairperson, (who also serves concurrently as a board member), along with four other presidentially appointed board members. All nominations to the Board (including the Chairperson) are made by the President and are subject to Senate confirmation. Once confirmed by the Senate and then formally appointed by the President, each Board member is eligible to serve a five-year fixed term.

During the last two years, the CSB, like the rest of the country, encountered unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the CSB was able to quickly adapt to remote work and also established a COVID-19 task force, which developed practices, policies, and a risk management strategy for the agency. Because of this, CSB Board members and staff have been able

to effectively pursue the agency's mission in a safe and efficient manner. In 2021 the CSB began to hold public board meetings via Government Zoom. These meetings, which are available to view by members of the public, present the CSB's findings, analysis and recommendations for investigations that have been completed, as well as updates on other agency actions, in an open and transparent manner. During 2021 through mid-2022 the CSB ceased taking public comments at these meetings, but the new CSB Board renewed the public comment process beginning in July 2022.

In March 2020, the CSB's Accidental Release Reporting Rule (ARRR) went into effect. This rule requires owners and operators of stationary sources to report any accidental release which causes a fatality, serious injury, or property damage in excess of one million dollars within 8-hours. This new reporting rule increases the number

of incidents reported to CSB and increases CSB's opportunities for uncovering root causes and promoting transparency in our review and investigative procedures. In 2022, as part of our commitment to transparency and information-sharing, the CSB began sharing information about chemical incidents reported under the ARRR on the CSB's website.

CSB investigations have collectively identified gaps in regulatory requirements, industry standards and guidance, workforce training and operations, and emergency planning and response that caused or exacerbated the human and environmental consequences of chemical incidents. Throughout its history, the CSB has initiated more than 130 deployments to chemical incidents and issued nearly 900 safety recommendations. The incidents that were investigated by the CSB resulted in more than 200 fatalities, over 1,200 injuries, and significant property and environmental damage.

Typical CSB investigations delve into all aspects

of chemical incidents: direct and proximate causes (e.g., equipment failures), underlying systemic and organizational causes (e.g., inadequacies in corporate or facility-level safety management systems and organizational culture), and opportunities for improving regulatory standards and enforcement. As part of our written investigative products, the CSB issues safety recommendations to a variety of potential recipients, including federal and state regulatory agencies, companies, industry organizations, standard-setting bodies, emergency responders, and labor groups. Recommendations are then distributed further via safety videos, which are published on the CSB website as well as the CSB YouTube channel. To date the CSB's YouTube channel has over 250,000 subscribers, with multiple videos having more than one million views.

Continuing and enhancing these activities helps the CSB move closer to reaching the goal of a United States free from chemical disasters.





Strategic Goal 1

Prevent recurrence of significant chemical incidents through independent investigations

GOAL CONTEXT

The CSB will investigate incidents that will have the greatest impact on U.S. workplaces, communities, and the environment. Because of the large number of incidents that occur each year, the CSB must exercise discretion when deciding whether to initiate an investigation. To that end, the agency reviews all reported incidents and uses a screening process to systematically evaluate and prudently select chemical incidents for investigation. The CSB will continue to refine screening criteria and information-gathering activities to improve its deployment decisions and effective resource allocations. The agency will enhance its techniques and processes to complete investigations in a timely manner, while ensuring that key safety issues are addressed thoroughly in the resulting products.



Strategic Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1.1. Investigate or review incidents and hazards to generate recommendations or findings with broad preventive impact.

The investigation and review of incidents allows the agency to allocate its resources in a manner that promotes efficiency and leads to the development of recommendations with broad impact. In addition, the CSB will continue to collect data to identify and analyze existing industry hazards. The CSB, per its legislative mandate, may conduct broad safety studies of such hazards to examine commonalities among significant incidents and draw attention to key lessons learned.

OBJECTIVE 1.2. Complete timely, high-quality investigations that determine the causes of incidents.

The CSB will continue to revise, update, and improve its processes and procedures for investigations and the production of investigation reports. The CSB will engage in a prioritized effort to develop protocols and procedures that can further advance the timeliness and quality of the products of our investigations. The CSB also will continue to enhance our review and utilization of information received under the CSB's ARRR.

OBJECTIVE 1.3. Develop and issue recommendations with broad preventive impact.

The CSB will strive to help achieve incident prevention by issuing recommendations to a variety of parties that are the most likely, or wield the most influence, to create safety change, including government entities, safety organizations, trade unions, trade associations, corporations, emergency response organizations, and educational institutions.

WHY THIS STRATEGY WILL WORK

The CSB's commitment to the investigation and review of chemical incidents will allow the agency to issue independent, technical investigation reports and recommendations with broad preventive impact, thereby informing all stakeholders of lessons learned and driving change for the prevention and mitigation of future incidents.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Number of deployments made to high-consequence incidents

Number of incidents resulting in the completion of a CSB product or included as part of a data set used in a CSB product or communication tool

Time to complete a review or investigation

Number of current investigations

Number of back-log investigations

Number of completed investigation products



Strategic Goal 2

Advocate safety and achieve change through recommendations, outreach, and education.

GOAL CONTEXT

The CSB's safety recommendations, as well as the investigative facts and findings from which the recommendations are derived, are the conduits through which chemical safety change can be achieved. The CSB's objective is to share its findings and recommendations with as wide an audience as possible, while also directing advocacy efforts to those stakeholders who have the greatest responsibility and capability to enact and promote them. Therefore, the CSB collaborates with other organizations to promote its safety message and maximize the impact of agency resources.

The agency uses various outreach mechanisms to promote its chemical safety information and disseminate updates on recommendations' status, product releases, new initiatives, and public events. The agency has identified a list of "Drivers of Critical Chemical Safety Change" to guide the efficient use of limited resources to pursue the implementation of changes that are most likely to achieve important, nation wide safety improvements.

CSB investigation reports and safety videos make the Board's investigative findings available to millions of people worldwide. They are available free-of-charge at www.csb.gov.

Strategic Objectives

OBJECTIVE 2.1. Pursue the implementation of recommendations

In addition to effective communication with recommendation recipients, the CSB will develop and maintain collaborative relationships with other agencies, industry, scientific, non-profit, and labor entities that are “agents of change” for chemical safety. Board Members and staff will work with the Office of Recommendations in outreach efforts and relationship-building, targeted toward implementation of CSB recommendations.

OBJECTIVE 2.2. Identify and strategically promote key chemical safety issues.

The CSB must identify and communicate key investigative findings to workers, industry, regulators, and the public. Communication strategies above and beyond investigative reports include: participation in public forums, symposia, and conferences on emerging safety issues, whether hosted by regulators, industry, labor, workforce, experts, non-profits, community groups, or other stakeholders; the production of thematic safety videos and video safety messages; the publication of articles relevant to CSB investigation findings; a presence on social media; regular communications and interaction with other government agencies; and the development of electronic resources related to these critical topic areas.

OBJECTIVE 2.3. Create and disseminate chemical safety information using a variety of engaging, high-visibility tools and products.

The CSB will use a variety of creative, high visibility tools and products including investigation reports; public meetings and news conferences to share investigation findings and safety recommendations, including ones held in the communities affected by chemical incidents; regular business meetings (whether in person or virtual), to update the public and stakeholders on current agency initiatives; scholarly publications to educate others on critical safety topics; safety videos to disseminate lessons in a widely-accessible format; public discourse to engage with all stakeholders; and strategic use of social media to promote investigation findings, high-impact recommendations, and ongoing safety initiatives.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Number of advocacy activities completed by the Board and staff to advance chemical safety improvements

Safety video YouTube channel growth

Number of safety videos viewed, website views, and publications downloaded

Number of outreach requests completed

WHY THIS STRATEGY WILL WORK

The CSB’s targeted advocacy for chemical safety change will allow the agency to use its resources strategically to promote actions that could have the greatest, most widespread preventive effects.

This approach will not only allow the CSB to respond appropriately to changing industry conditions and emerging technology, but also provide a framework for prioritizing both long-term and short-term agency goals.





Strategic Goal 3

Recruit and maintain an engaged, high-performing workforce.

GOAL CONTEXT

CSB employees are the agency's most valuable resource. Goal 3 seeks to optimize our human capital resources to advance the agency's mission. Proper use of employee skills will best serve the public and the CSB.

The CSB strives for continual improvement to promote organizational efficiency throughout the agency. Focusing on CSB policies, procedures, and training will also help improve productivity, encourage adherence to the CSB's core values, and promote a code of conduct that all CSB employees should seek to follow. This approach, along with strong managerial skills, mutual respect and open communications will foster an open environment that empowers employees to contribute ideas and solutions to their work.

Strategic Objectives

OBJECTIVE 3.1. Implement effective recruiting and skills-based training and mentorship.

To achieve significant human capital goals, the agency will develop and update onboarding platforms, career ladders, individual development plans, Office of Personnel Management assessments, award and recognition programs, and skills-based training on both group and individual levels. The goal of these efforts is to provide employees with the skills needed to help the CSB run effectively, which will also promote the retention of talented employees.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All CSB employees will treat each other with mutual respect by:

- Conducting ourselves in a highly professional manner
- Communicating constructively and often
- Treating others as you want to be treated
- Valuing teamwork
- Taking personal responsibility for making the CSB a supportive, productive, and positive work environment
- Building trusting relationships
- Working collaboratively, include others when appropriate

WHY THIS STRATEGY WILL WORK

CSB employees have been stretched with increasing workload volume, Covid-19 limitations, and hiring challenges. Efforts aimed at recruiting, onboarding and retention all focus on building an effective workforce able to carry out the CSB mission. The approaches the CSB will use are based on sound organizational development principles that have been demonstrated to improve employee engagement, which in turn will foster positive performance. The CSB has recommended that companies review and adjust their organizational cultures to promote safety and continual improvement. Over the next five years, the agency will apply the same process to its own operations to improve organizational effectiveness and employee morale, which should enhance the agency's ability to drive safety change.





OBJECTIVE 3.2. Encourage management development and leadership at all levels.

The CSB will implement management training to improve accountability and reward sound practices. The agency will incorporate a management skills development program for managers and prospective leaders. This program will emphasize the importance of holding managers accountable for making sound decisions and empowering others and will reward those who do. Management accountability will also be a critical element in all supervisors’ and managers’ performance plans. Ultimately, the objective of this program will be to create standard expectations for all agency managers and prospective managers.

OBJECTIVE 3.3. Increase retention across the agency to ensure continuity.

The CSB will work to reduce the employee attrition rate, thereby increasing the continuity throughout the agency and enhancing overall performance and efficacy. Retaining agency staff year over year is critical to the timely completion of investigation, delivery of the overall mission, and ensuring a productive and supportive workplace environment.

OBJECTIVE 3.4. Strengthen operational performance and project management efforts.

The agency will achieve improved operational performance by adhering to agency and departmental action plans and making resource determinations based on their potential to advance the CSB strategic goals. Using performance metrics identified in this plan, the agency will create realistic sub-goals with metrics, milestones, and targets for each action plan item.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Number of and time taken to fill open positions with new CSB hires
Develop and implement targeted onboarding and mentoring plans, by office
Percentage increase of selected Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results
Reduce high-performing employee attrition relative to 2021
Number of diversity recruiting, and retention efforts completed
Implement management training to improve accountability and reward sound practices
Percentage of departmental action plans implemented

CORE VALUES

To achieve our goals, we must continually communicate and uphold these values across the organization.

OBJECTIVITY

Conduct independent investigations that collect, review, and analyze evidence to uncover root causes and promote recommendations to keep communities and workers safe.

TECHNICAL RIGOR

Perform thorough research, analysis, and reviews that contribute to well-designed, thoughtful, accurate, and reliable work products.

INTEGRITY

Promote honesty, fairness, consistency, and transparency in our words and actions.

COLLABORATION

Support coalition building, teamwork, and resource-sharing internally and externally, including with current agency stakeholders and potential stakeholders.

DEDICATION

Demonstrate commitment to the employees, communities, and stakeholders whom we serve.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

Create an internal culture that seeks to learn from all experiences, acquires new knowledge, considers all viewpoints, promotes mutual respect, provides responsibility, empowers employees, shares information, avoids silos, sets new goals, and applies lessons learned.





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