

Shell Deer Park general manager focuses on 'people and planet'

By: SUSAN KERN
Associate Editor

Aamir Farid knows about busy days. As the general manager of the Shell Deer Park, Texas, facility, which houses the sixth largest refinery in the United States as well as a large chemical plant, Farid's days are filled with meetings and interfacing with various groups, individuals and departments to make sure everyone at the site is aligned and working toward the same objectives, which leaves him with little free time.

Recently, his days became a lot busier when, on March 1, a decision was made to unify the refining and chemical operations at the Deer Park site, and Farid was named general manager of the entire facility. (He was previously general manager for the refinery.)

"This is a huge opportunity and a huge challenge in bringing the chemical plant and refinery back together," he said. "When I hired into Deer Park for the very first time in 1978, this was actually a unified site with one general manager. In the 1990s, it got split apart. So the opportunity to be the individual who was going to bring it back together was just a unique opportunity and a circle of life moment for me."

Farid, who is originally from Pakistan but grew up in New York City, started his 30-year career with Shell in 1978 after graduating from Stanford University with a degree in chemical engineering. He began his career at the Deer Park facility with early roles in technical support, refinery planning and optimization, and operations. He then moved on to hold a variety of manufacturing leadership assignments at other Shell facilities, before assuming his current role as general manager of the Deer Park site in September 2006.

Shell Deer Park

Shell Deer Park, conveniently located on the Houston Ship Channel, covers 1,500 acres and is home to a fully integrated, 340,000-bpd refinery and a petrochemical plant.

The Deer Park refinery is a 50-50 joint venture between Shell Oil Co. and PMI Norteamerica, S.A. de C.V., a subsidiary of Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), and produces such items as gasoline, jet fuel, diesel fuel, propane and butane, asphalt, chemical feedstocks and petroleum coke.



Shell Deer Park is home to a fully integrated refinery and petrochemical plant.

Very few final "consumer products" are made at the Shell Deer Park Chemical Plant. Rather, it manufactures base chemicals or raw material chemicals that are sold to other chemical companies that transform them into thousands of consumer products including plastics, paints, pharmaceuticals, carpeting, clothing, adhesives and building materials.

The geographic location of Shell Deer Park is one of its most important assets. It is strategically located in terms of feedstock supply, product distribution and storage access.

'People and planet'

According to Farid, there is a phrase that he communicates with his employees that he feels is most important — people and planet.

"The idea is that we always want to take care of people first and planet, i.e., environment and community, second," he said. "I try to make sure I instill in everyone who works here that decisions have to be made based on taking care of the people and planet. If I can get every person to understand that, then I am confident that they will do the right thing."

To help protect his employees and make sure everyone goes home safe at the end of the work day, Shell Deer Park begins each day with a two- to three-minute "Start the Day with Safety" video to make sure everyone starts each day thinking about safety. In addition, Farid is personally involved in safety observations and health and safety meetings throughout the week, and all of the leadership team members are involved in various safety activities.

Recently, the facility implemented "Blues Wednesdays." (The blue signifies the color of the facility's flame-resistant clothing.) Each Wednesday, all afternoon meetings are cancelled so that everyone can go into the field and interact with people to really understand how they are working and what risks they are taking.

"This is working great because it forces everyone to get back on the floor and go to various parts of the plant to find out how things really are," Farid said. "If it's not a safe practice, then we will change that."

"My expectation is that no one gets hurt here period, and that's doable, but it requires us to remain vigilant every single day."

Farid also focuses a lot of time and effort on reducing the site's environmental footprint, which he said goes back to the idea of people and planet.

"We obviously want to be in compliance," he said. "Beyond that, we want to be a good neighbor and a good corporate citizen, and it's important to me to run a site where we are continuously reducing our environmental emissions."

"My aspiration is that the people who drive by the site or who live and work around us don't know we're there."

To help reduce the environmental footprint of the site, Shell Deer Park's process units and other equipment are designed, built,

operated and maintained to be clean, safe and acceptable to the community. In addition, Shell continues to invest in new technology, implement better operating procedures and strengthen its training programs to improve environmental performance.

In the late 1990s, Shell signed a consent decree with EPA on behalf of its refining facilities that required Shell to put into place a series of substantial environmental investments, which have been completed at Shell facilities throughout the nation, including Shell Deer Park where a \$20 million scrubber system and safety flare system have been put in place.

In the chemical plant, Shell Deer Park has invested money on processes that will reduce flaring and benzene emissions, both of which have gone down in recent years. Overall, the Deer Park facility has seen its environmental performance improve each year.

"We have something called key performance indicators that we track each year," Farid said, "and incidents that impact those indicators have gone down year after year. Last year, the chemical plant and refinery both had their lowest number of environmental incidents."

Although the site's environmental performance is improving, there are still challenges to be faced. Recently, the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit against the Deer Park facility based on data that was on file in the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality office. Although this was disappointing, Farid is working to prove the site's commitment to environmental performance.

"Our challenge is to further the environmental performance and work with the people who filed the lawsuit to help them understand what we're trying to accomplish and demonstrate our commitment to continuously reduce our environmental footprint," he said. "We have some significant environmental projects that we are working on, which we think will have a positive impact."

Deer Park and the community

Involved in both the city and regional areas, employees at Shell Deer Park take community service very seriously and take an active role in several community organizations, including Local Emergency Planning Committees, Channel Industries Mutual Aid, volunteer fire departments, Deer Park Chamber of Commerce, East Harris County Manufacturers Association, Houston Regional Monitoring, Texas Chemical Council, Wheelhouse, Bridge Over Troubled Waters and the Deer Park Educational Foundation.

To further help the community, more than 150 active and retired employees of Shell Deer Park volunteer their time and talents as members of SERVE (Shell Employees & Retirees



Shell Deer Park General Manager Aamir Farid.

Volunteerism Effort). The employees work with Deer Park and help with local needy organizations such as shelters, and Boys and Girls Harbor.

"We're a big entity and my intent is that we're not just tolerated, but we're also valued because we are doing things for the people in the community," Farid said. "We have a big impact on the city so it's important that we make sure we interact with local leaders to get to know each other and support the things that are good for the area."

The staff at Shell Deer Park is also committed to educating young people about the benefits a career in industry can have. It has been a partner-in-education with Deer Park High School for more than 18 years and is a co-founder and supporter of the Science Teachers' Institute, which is conducted at the University of Houston.

Leaving a legacy of improvement

When it's time for Farid to move on from the Shell Deer Park facility, he hopes that he is remembered for one thing — making the place better than what it was when he started. What does he mean by that?

"It means a site where we deliver the kind of performance one should expect of a premier facility, which is centered around safety, reducing the environmental footprint, and being a good neighbor and corporate citizen," he said. "It's also important that we do all of that the right way, so we set our principles based on people and planet."

"My goal is to take an organization and try to make it as good as it can be. I find that if all the individuals work together, we can accomplish some pretty great things. If I can help guide that, then that's all I want." □

Shell Deer Park

5900 Highway 225
Deer Park, TX 77536

Products: Refinery — Gasoline, jet fuel, diesel fuel, propane and butane, asphalt, chemical feedstocks and petroleum coke. Chemical plant — Benzene, toluene, solvents, ethylene, isoprene, piperylenes, alcohols, isopropyl ether, sulfur and phenol.

Employees: 1,800 Shell employees plus contractor employees

Acres: 1,500

