

Mirror, Mirror

By Steve Grimm

The country's second largest power company goes belly up after lying to the public and falsifying documents regarding the company's financial worth. Who is the fall guy? An accountant! Not the CEO. Not any of the big wigs in the organization. An accountant! Even the Vice President of the United States refuses to discuss or even to admit to his involvement.

An operator, after years of being the "squeaky wheel" becomes complacent and lax in his duties. The operator becomes the object of an investigation even though it is ultimately the responsibility of the municipality to make sure problems are addressed, and corrective action taken, in a timely fashion.

I just don't get it. There seems to be a lack of taking responsibility for ones actions in today's society. As a parent, you try to teach your children that they are responsible for their actions, that their actions do have consequences. Then you send them to school to learn what it takes to survive in the "real world". Soon they start coming home with all these excuses for why they are not doing well in school. Everything from the teacher is boring, to I had a hang nail. Everything, except what you have tried for so long to teach them, the truth. Why can't they just take responsibility for their actions by saying they just didn't study? I think it is a class they teach in school. "Intro to Unaccountability" and "It's Not My Fault 101". I actually had a teacher tell my son that the grade didn't matter, just as long as he passed the test!! How can you compete with that?

If it sounds like I'm a frustrated parent, I am. If you're wondering where I'm going with this, what does my frustration with the education of my children have to do with anything, well let me explain. It was partly due to this frustration that I made a comment to an operator that I was soon to regret. He was telling me about some operational problems he was having, and I replied, " Well, at least you're making permit." Wrong comment to the wrong operator! He proceeded to tell me that it's not just about making permit. These problems were affecting the way his plant was operating. If all he was worried about was making permit, then he would be failing in his responsibility as an operator. Thank you, Brian, for that slap back to reality. In order to make permit you really need to have a handle on your process. Grades really do matter. It's not just about passing the test. It's also about how you pass it.

Another jolt back to reality came several weeks later from yet another operator. This time I didn't say anything foolish. During the course of our conversation, I was reminded that, as operators, we have many responsibilities. We are responsible for meeting permit on a consistent basis, and often we are expected to do this with what we are given, be it the time spent at the plant, help, money and supplies, or the lack thereof. Sometimes it's not easy. But a responsible operator, one with a conscience, will do the very best that they can, day after day, with what they are given, and with or without the recognition. At the end of the day, that operator can go home and be able to look at him/herself in the mirror, and feel good about themselves and the job they did.

Thank you, Steve, for helping me out of the remainder of my funk. I have pulled my soapbox out of the closet. I'm ready to step back on it and live up to my responsibilities to you. If we are to be responsible for these plants, then we need to act

responsible. Don't sit there and whine and complain that the mayor won't let me do this, or I can't get any help. These are just excuses. Anyone who has the will can find a way. We know our responsibilities, and we know what we need to do to live up to those responsibilities. Now it's time we let everyone else know. This job is about more than collecting a pay check. It's about dedication, dedication to the profession. Dedication to yourself. Dedication to the environment.

Now, go home and look in the mirror. Do you like what you see?