

SPOTLIGHT

COMMENTARY: Whiting refinery remains committed to community

Chris DellaFranco BP Whiting Refinery Jun 1, 2025 0

A year ago, [bp’s Whiting Refinery published an open letter](#) to our community that carried a simple message: We had heard the concerns of our neighbors, and we were committed to doing something about it.

Around that time, we had experienced operational incidents, including a widescale power outage that resulted in a large flaring event at the refinery. While the Whiting team and our first responder partners did incredible work to safely manage the incident, our neighbors were understandably upset and rightly demanded more from us.

More communication. More transparency. More community engagement.

One year later, I want to share an update on our progress, and to reaffirm our commitment to this work and to our community.

Let me unequivocally state: The safety of our people and our neighbors will always be our highest priority. There is nothing more important.

That said, we know some residents have been frustrated at times about getting the information they need when there is an incident or issue at the refinery. Some of you also told us the refinery seemed like a “black box” at times, and you are eager to learn more about what happens behind the fence line and about the hundreds of people who work here.

So, what have we done to change that?

First, we’ve changed how we communicate. We launched a bp Whiting Refinery Facebook page that now shares more information about the refinery’s operations, the folks who work here, and our activities in the community. We encourage you to follow us.

Next, we’ve reached an agreement with the Lake County Emergency Management office that will help the refinery get critical information faster to first responders and local officials. This will also enable Lake County and local municipalities to quickly disseminate public safety guidance, like shelter-in-place notices or road closures, to residents when needed. In fact, just this month we participated in a practice drill with county and city partners to test these crisis response procedures in the event of an incident at the refinery.

We’ve also worked to improve transparency. For example, we’ve updated our website to include air monitoring data from the refinery. We’ve also added other resources and information about air quality and safety equipment at the refinery, like flare stacks. And we’ve hosted public officials and community members for tours to give more in-depth explanations of refinery equipment and processes, and how we safely manage our work.

Lastly, we’ve worked hard to increase our engagement with the community. Last year, we held our first-ever Whiting Community Night, and more than 200 of you came out to meet our team, ask questions and learn more about the work we do every day. We also launched a new Community Engagement Council, which is now meeting regularly and serving as an important forum for two-way dialogue between refinery leadership and members of the community. And we’ve continued investing in community programs, such as STEM education in local schools, workforce development partnerships with Ivy Tech Community College and other colleges and universities in the region, and an ongoing tree-planting campaign in neighborhoods near the refinery.

Being a good neighbor and a responsible operator go hand-in-hand. You can’t have one without the other.

That’s why, when I had the privilege of taking over the Whiting Refinery last summer, I worked with the team to create a refreshed strategy for the site that placed a renewed focus on safe and reliable operations. The team and I are laser-focused on continuous improvement in this area.

Elsewhere, we continue to make multi-million investments in our critical infrastructure, and we are planning additional spending to make our refinery more efficient and more competitive.

We have made progress. But our work is not done.

As we have for more than 135 years, we will keep working every day to make Whiting Refinery the best it can be -- and a place that, we hope, instills pride in our people and our community for many years to come.

Chris DellaFranco is vice president of refining at bp Whiting Refinery.