



Profile

Getting to know Larry Willis, I&E Technician

What do you do for PL Propylene?

As the I&E Technician, I conduct troubleshooting and preventative maintenance for the advanced instrumentation systems at the plant. These systems play an integral role in keeping the plant up and running and allow the plant to be run easily and efficiently. I take pride in the fact that the work I do has a direct impact on the plant's productivity and success.



What is your favorite thing about working there?

I work with a great team that was put together well. Everyone here is very good at what they do, and we have strong working relationships with each other because we're each self-motivated and trust one another to do their job. This isn't typical in our industry or at any other place I've worked. At PL Propylene, you feel like you're a part of the company, not just a number.

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What do you do for fun?

I attend church regularly and teach Sunday school. I also enjoy bay fishing and spending time with my family.

Did you know?

Larry Willis is PL Propylene's resident Santa Claus! Mr. Claus was very busy this past December, visiting the Cossaboom Family YMCA, Texas Children's Hospital, Shriners Hospital for Children, the Houston Community Food Center and State Rep. Carol Alvarado's Annual East End Children's Christmas Party to pass out toys and spread Christmas cheer!

In the Community Giving Back for the Holidays

Part of the Vision Statement for the PL Propylene Houston plant is a commitment to being a good neighbor and actively involved in the community. During the 2012 holiday season, PL Propylene employees came together to give back in a big way to several projects:





Cossaboom Family YMCA Angel Tree

For the last two years, PL Propylene has partnered with the Cossaboom Family YMCA for its annual Angel Tree program. Held by local YMCA organizations across the country, the Angel Tree program helps to provide Christmas gifts for children of deserving families in local communities.



Each December, a Christmas tree is assembled in the lobby of the PL Propylene plant and decorated with the names of Angel Tree children. Plant employees come pull a name off of the tree, fill out the necessary paperwork and purchase gifts for their Angel tree child. The gifts are then placed under the tree until they are delivered by Santa to the YMCA the week before Christmas.

This year, 20 children were adopted by employees with each child receiving multiple presents. PL Propylene also provided gifts for children in need at Willowbrook Apartments, an apartment complex next to the Cossaboom YMCA.

“Our employees really love being a part of this community project every year,” says John Parkinson, Vice President of Operations. “We’re grateful for the opportunity to grant a few Christmas wishes for these wonderful children.”

In addition to the Cossaboom YMCA Angel Tree, plant employees also donated canned goods and donated toys for the Community Food Center. After collecting donations throughout the month, Santa delivered the food items and gifts to the Center’s annual Christmas Party.



Santa Surprises the Texas Children's Hospital and Shriners Children's Hospital

On Sunday, December 17, Santa stopped by State Rep. Carol Alvarado's annual East End Children's Christmas Party at the Houston Children's Museum. After handing out presents to all of the children there, Santa was so filled with Christmas spirit that he and an "elf" or two from PL Propylene decided to make a surprise visit to the Texas Children's Hospital and the Shriners Children's Hospital to deliver candy canes to the children staying there.

"Those surprise visits were such a fulfilling experience," says Larry Willis, I&E Technician. "We thought "it's a wonderful Sunday afternoon, Santa is here – where else can we go?" Obviously, the impromptu visits made it hard to visit all of the children there, so we definitely want to expand upon this next year."

iPads for the Rucker Elementary Reading Program

Like most K-12 schools throughout Texas, Rucker Elementary faces a growing problem in reading, writing and testing. As many of its students speak English as a second language, they struggle with standardized tests in English and learning critical reading skills.

Solving this problem has proved to be difficult. Textbooks have yet to be successful, and computers – while engaging and effective – are far too costly and cumbersome to be placed in every classroom.



If reading and writing curriculum could be taught using the iPad, a mobile technology that children in all grade levels could grasp, then she could finally have a way to get around the language barrier.



That's when Mrs. Bradshaw – the fourth grade English teacher at Rucker Elementary – had a brilliant idea. If reading and writing curriculum could be taught using the iPad, a mobile technology that children in all grade levels could grasp, then she could finally have a way to get around the language barrier.

When PL Propylene learned of the issue, they jumped in to help. Mrs. Bradshaw sat down with the PL Propylene team last summer to determine how many iPads they were interested in donating.

"We thought they were going to say one or two, maybe five," Bradshaw says. "We couldn't believe it when they said 20."

Before PL Propylene could move forward with the purchase, it had to be approved by the Houston ISD School Board. In July, the school board approved a \$14,500 donation to purchase the iPads plus the necessary reading software and equipment. By December, Rucker



Elementary had 20 brand new iPads loaded with educational software and ready to go.

The donation also included a movable dock and charging station for the iPads. With this system, any teacher is able to check out the iPads for her students to use. The teacher also has freedom on where to test students — they are no longer restricted to a specific desk, table or classroom.

“The iPads are a motivator for students. They’ll work really hard so that they get to use the iPad at the end of the day.”

Now, a student can check out an iPad to read a book and then be tested on it using an app on the same device. Because teachers have access to the devices as well, they can upload the students’ scores or monitor them from another computer. Parents too can use the same app to monitor their child’s progress from home, getting them involved in the classroom and helping communication between the teacher and parents.

“This has been an enormous step in implementing technology into our classrooms,” says Bernadette Blanco, Principal of Rucker Elementary. “Our teachers have researched all kinds of new ways to use the iPads. It’s pretty amazing how many apps we’ve found that don’t cost anything at all yet have been very beneficial.”

Even standard apps on the iPad such as the Notes feature have been put to use in the classroom.

“In addition to taking notes, students can copy and paste their research from the internet and use it to write essays or journal entries,” says Blanco.

To date, the new iPad program has been a great success, not only with students reading and writing skills but behavioral skills as well.

“The iPads are a motivator for students. They’ll work really hard so that they get to use the iPad at the end of the day,” says Blanco. “We had a student who had little interest in school work. But when the iPads were introduced, it changed everything. He came to school saying, “Look! I did my homework so I could use my iPad.””

Inside the classroom, teachers have observed students helping each other how to use the iPad or how to navigate a particular program.

“There’s just something really neat about small children using an iPad and helping out each other to learn how to use it. It’s really neat to see them explain to their peers,” says Blanco. “They’re taking ownership of their own classroom. They’re showing leadership in teaching.”

PL Propylene is now working with Rucker Elementary to develop a wireless internet lounge on campus. Like a library space with bean bags, students could check out an iPad to go to the café to work, research or study. The internet lounge is currently set to be built in May.

Wings Over Houston

Every October, a fleet of fighter jets, helicopters, commemorative planes and NASA aircraft descend upon Ellington Airport for the Wings Over Houston Airshow. Hosted by the Gulf Coast and Houston Wings of the Commemorative Air Force, the weekend event features riveting air shows, plane rides, concerts, antique planes and more. Over 85,000 attend every year.

But on Friday, the Wings Over Houston Airshow opens a day early for an exclusive free performance for several hundred special needs children and adults across Texas. PL Propylene has been a proud partner of this one-day event for five years in a row.

“This is one of the plant’s favorite community events,” says John Parkinson, VP Operations for PL Propylene. “We first began volunteering for Wings Over Houston in 2008 and have elected to continue our support every year.”

It takes an enormous group of volunteers to manage the event. This year, 15 PL Propylene employees spent the day setting up tables and chairs, trafficking buses, and running golf carts. Several hundred special needs individuals on over 33 buses attended the event.



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Technology Corner Our Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The PL Propylene plant is fairly new. Purchased in March 2008, the plant began operations in late 2010. After only a few months of routine normal operations, PL Propylene began looking for ways to make the plant even better.

“We’ve adopted a model of continuous improvement,” says Environmental Manager Vance Darr. “We’re always looking for ways to improve the process and to better respond to plant emergencies.”

Because of PL Propylene’s proximity to the local community and roads, they have to be more proactive than other refineries in more rural areas. It’s also one of their commitments as members of the Houston Community Advisory Panel.

This proactive stance has been instilled as a core value at PL Propylene. In fact, one can safely assume that something is being improved at the plant at any given time.

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“This is the most important part of our process — quality of life,” says Darr. “We look at everything with the perspective of a local resident, not the industry or the law. We ask ourselves, “Would I be happy with this if it were in my backyard?” If the answer is “no”, then an improvement is necessary.”

This often excels the rate of plant improvements at other refineries, which wait until a complaint is filed or a piece of equipment must be replaced. In addition to required permits and inspections, PL Propylene sets aside a portion of its annual budget for process improvements and defines new improvement goals for the plant each year.

Here’s just a few of the plant improvements made by PL Propylene in 2012:

Flare Minimization — The plant flare is necessary to combust and remove hydrocarbon emissions before they reach the environment. The TCEQ has authorized a set level of emissions from the plant flare that is safe for the environment, but PL Propylene sought to go above and beyond what’s required by law.



Last year, PL Propylene conducted a survey of all vent streams going to the flare to look for ways to recover and reuse vent streams in the plant, reusing gas that would have otherwise been wasted. We have also switched from natural gas to nitrogen, a lower-polluting vent gas.

Emissions Survey — The TCEQ requires that we inspect every valve and connector in the plant quarterly to make sure they’re not leaking.



In addition, we also hire a 3rd party contractor to bring in an infrared camera that detects hydrocarbon leaks. They survey the entire plant looking for any hydrocarbon leaks that would not be detected by the TCEQ-required methods. This allows us to reduce emissions farther than what’s required and lowers costs over time.

Noise Reduction — In 2012, PL Propylene conducted a special project to install upgraded mufflers on the plant’s jet engine atmospheric vents. The new mufflers reduced noise levels to under 95 decibels.



In addition, annual sound level surveys are performed to identify sources of excessive noise. Whenever a high noise (in excess of 95 db(A)) is found, we try to address it by making adjustments to the equipment generating the noise or implement some other engineering control such as acoustical insulation, enclosures or silencers.

Safety Performance Update

This February, PL Propylene celebrated two and a half years with no recordable injuries among its employees. While the industry best in class for the Total Recordable Incident Rate (the number of recordable injuries versus the total number of employee hours worked over a given year) is usually a .3 or a .4, PL Propylene's Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) was 0.0 for 2012.



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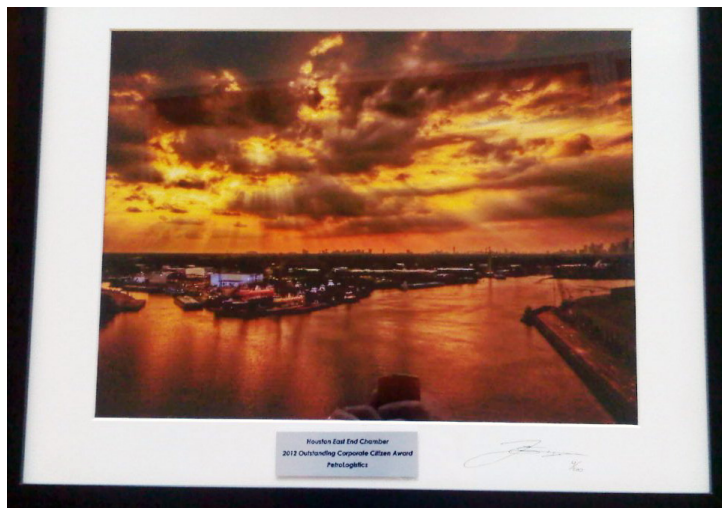
PL Propylene's contractor workforce also had a TRIR of 0.0 for 2012. Both Mundy Maintenance and Securitas are celebrating 2 years without recordable injuries, whereas Brock has been injury-free since the beginning of their maintenance contract in 2009.

Did You Know?

PL Propylene was honored with the East End Chamber of Commerce's 2012 Outstanding Corporate Citizenship Award in October. The Outstanding Corporate Citizenship Award is reserved for active corporate members that have demonstrated a strong, steady commitment to giving back to the East End Community. PL Propylene's employees are passionate about serving others and regularly donate their time and money to nonprofit initiatives. Some of PL Propylene's annual projects include:

- Donations to the Chavez High School Engineering Academy;

- The Bernie Sandner Memorial Scholarship;
- Donations to Rucker Elementary;
- Bi-Annual Work Days at the Rucker Elementary Butterfly Garden;
- Volunteering at Wings Over Texas;
- Cossaboom Family YMCA Angel Tree; and
- Food & Toy Drive for the Houston Community Food Bank.



Wide Open Spaces

In December, PL Propylene purchased the remaining 30 acres of land surrounding the plant. PL Propylene intends to use this space a "buffer property" to keep the area between the plant and surrounding neighborhoods free and open.



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At the Plant

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