



VIEWS & VISIONS

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Deconstruction, Reconstruction and the Future of Regional Methanol Production

Frank Bakker, Chief Executive Officer
US Methanol LLC



With nearly three decades of experience in the chemical industry, Frank Bakker is the Chief Executive Officer of US Methanol LLC, a production and distribution company headquartered in Charleston, West Virginia. Prior to joining US Methanol, Bakker was President, Chief Executive Officer and Director of OCI Partners LP, where he spent six years building the company and overseeing the successful restoration of a mothballed methanol and ammonia plant in Beaumont, Texas.

For 22 years, Bakker worked for the global science-based company DSM, where he served in a variety of operational and managerial roles, including Manufacturing Director and Site Manager for a thermoplastic elastomer plant and Site Manager for DSM Neoresins.

Bakker earned his master's degree in business administration from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a master's in mechanical engineering from Twente University in Enschede, Netherlands.

In early 2016, US Methanol LLC, a privately funded company with corporate offices in the capital city of Charleston, West Virginia, chose the Dow Industrial Park in the neighboring community of Institute as its location to build a modern methanol production facility. After a positive and welcome reception from area businesses, citizens, state, city and county officials, Liberty One officially broke ground in September 2017. But before construction began, a deconstruction of sorts had to occur.

US Methanol had acquired a mothballed methanol production plant in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that had been shut down due to economic conditions. It then spent many months carefully and strategically disassembling the plant. Once the disassembly was complete and materials

were meticulously organized, components were loaded onto several ships and transported to the United States. It was a long, intricate and technically challenging process, but construction in Institute began with the project's primary contractor, Bilfinger Westcon, shortly after the components arrived from Brazil.

Constructing a methanol plant of any size is no easy task. The Liberty One project was made even more challenging as we basically took an existing facility apart, piece by piece, and then asked our contractor to put it all back together again in a relatively short amount of time –



New stair tower for H-11-1 Reformer in Unit 1000 at Liberty One site



US Methanol CEO Frank Bakker speaks at Liberty One groundbreaking

and in an entirely new country – while maintaining the highest standards of safety and workmanship.

Since breaking ground, hundreds of workers have been on-site daily as the facility undergoes major upgrades, repairs and modifications during the construction phase. This will result in increased efficiency and an expected useful life of 30 years. US Methanol plans to be here for decades to come, operating safely, reliably and in an environmentally sustainable fashion. As with most construction projects, let alone one of such scale and scope, there are often bumps along the way. It has been no different with the Liberty One project.

We initially expected to be in production in the fourth quarter of 2018. However, during detailed inspections of the production plant's compressor, it was determined that the purchase of a new unit was the appropriate course of action. Our commitment to safety and reliability is paramount, therefore a new compressor was quickly ordered. Units of this size are custom-built and come with a lead time of at least one year. This caused a significant delay in our original plans. Construction in all other areas of the plant, however, is progressing nicely.

Today, when you drive by the Liberty One site in Institute, you will see hundreds of hard-working construction workers on-site and lots of exciting progress taking place. We expect to be in the commissioning phase of the project in the fourth quarter of 2019. With great anticipation and excitement, we look forward



Distillation Tower T-3301 installed on foundation in Unit 3000 at Liberty One site

to moving out of the construction phase and into the production phase.

US Methanol currently has 20 employees. Once in production, the plant will provide approximately 50 permanent jobs in the area. This is an excellent indicator of progress in West Virginia. US Methanol's mission is to reliably produce and deliver the highest quality methanol at the lowest delivered price to industrial consumers via barge, rail and truck. The Liberty One project plans to do just that, and we are excited to be doing it here in West Virginia. W