

# Chemical Engineering Seminars – TT 2009

*Week 2, Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, 4:00PM-5:00PM  
Lecture Room 1, Thom Building, Engineering Science*

## **Health & Safety: An Engineering Challenge or a Battle for Hearts and Minds?**

Judith Hackitt CBE,  
HSE Chair

### ***Abstract***

Students of chemical engineering will find it hard to reconcile the poor image of ‘elf n safety’ in the media with the very real challenges they know they will face in whatever field of chemical and process engineering they will enter after graduation. In the last few years major incidents at Texas City and Buncefield have reminded us all of the critical importance of plant integrity and process safety. But to most people it seems that common sense risk management has been overtaken by risk aversion and risk avoidance to an extent that it threatens to stifle innovation. How do we get back to the time honoured principles of common sense, proportionality and personal responsibility. Is this a job for communicator and motivational specialists to win hearts and minds? Or is it a challenge which needs the skills and expertise of engineers? The answer of course, is that it’s both!

Judith Hackitt CBE, FIChemE, FCGI, Chair of the Health and Safety Executive and Member of IChemE will speak about the important balancing act which all engineers must perform in meeting the challenges of Health and Safety in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### ***Biography***

Judith was appointed Chair of the Health and Safety Commission with effect from 1 October 2007 for a term of 5 years and became Chair of the Health and Safety Executive when the two organisations merged on 1 April 2008. Judith previously served as a Commissioner between 2002 and 2005. She was awarded her CBE for services to health and safety. Judith returned in 2007 from an assignment as Director of the Chemistry for Europe project with the European Chemical Industry based in Brussels. She was Director of Business and Responsible Care (1998 – 2002) and Director General (2002 – 2006) at the Chemical Industries Association (CIA). Judith worked for Exxon Chemicals for 15 years in various process management roles at Fawley. She was subsequently European Operations Director of a speciality pigments business before becoming Group Risk Manager at Elementis PLC with world-wide responsibility for health and safety insurance and litigation. She also served for three years as a non-executive Director of Oxfordshire Health Authority. Judith trained as a Chemical Engineer at Imperial College, London and is a Fellow of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, an Ordinary Member of Council of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, a Fellow of the City and Guilds Institute and an Honorary Vice President of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. Judith holds no other Ministerial appointments nor is she engaged in any political activity.