

Chevron Phillips starts commissioning new Texas ethane cracker

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Chevron Phillips Chemical has finished building its world-scale ethane cracker at the Cedar Bayou complex in Baytown, Texas, and begun commissioning activities, it said Wednesday.

"The unit is now undergoing a series of rigorous commissioning activities, system checks and final certifications to ensure a safe and reliable start-up, and consistent, on-spec production," the company said in a statement.

In September, the company had said the 1.5 million mt/year cracker was expected to finish construction and begin commissioning by the end of first quarter next year, followed by ramp-up to full production in the second quarter.

Work on the cracker came to a halt due to Hurricane Harvey in late August, when the entire complex was shut. The site was among the hardest hit along the Texas coast, taking on four to eight feet of water. Pre-Harvey, the new cracker had been expected to wrap up construction and finish commissioning by the end of 2017, with production rampup in early 2018.

Ethylene sourced from the new ethane cracker will feed the company's ethylene derivatives business, including two new polyethylene units.

As part of the company's US Gulf Coast Petrochemical Project, CP Chem started up in September two new 500,000 mt/year polyethylene units in Old Ocean, Texas, bringing the site's PE production to 1 million mt/year, the company said. The units can produce a wide variety of PE resin, from metallocene LLDPE film to bi-modal film and pipe products, the company said.

In addition to the cracker and PE units, the company has also bought nearly 3,000 newly built rail cars and built a storage-in-transition facility to ship polyethylene pellets via rail to domestic customers and to ports for export.