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Bringing to market their Safety ECO Funnel® for Reducing Emission of Volatile Solvents and Toxic Fumes, CP Lab Safety is reducing the Exposure of Lab Workers and Chemists to Hazardous Chemicals and Minimizing the chance of a Fire

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“Our mission is to keep people healthy, safe and productive, while safeguarding the environment at the same time.”

- Kelly Farhangi Najafi

Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO: *Ms. Najafi, what was the focus when CP Lab Safety started? What is the vision today?*

Ms. Najafi: CP Lab Safety started in 1996 on the premise of reducing the emission of volatile solvents and toxic fumes in the lab and ultimately cleaning up the environment through pollution prevention. My husband invented our first product, the Safety ECO Funnel® (or “ecological funnel”) which essentially began as a basic funnel with a lid and some special internal features. The lid and inner tube design traps chemical fumes inside waste containers, preventing the fumes from evaporating and contaminating the environment. ECO Funnel reduces emissions by up to 99.9%, providing three key benefits: First, it reduces the exposure of lab workers and chemists to hazardous chemicals; second, it reduces the emission of toxic fumes into the environment; third, it reduces the chance of fire by minimizing fumes in the lab.

CEOCFO: *How does ECO Funnel work?*

Ms. Najafi: ECO Funnel has a latching lid with a gasket, and a long tube that extends into the solvent bottle. The magic of ECO Funnel was a very simple, patented concept. ECO Funnel works by reducing the available surface area of the chemical waste to dramatically reduce evaporation, and then it prevents the remaining fumes from escaping through its tightly closed lid. If you use a regular open funnel on a waste bottle, the solvent escapes freely into the air. However, when you use ECO Funnel and close the lid, there are virtually no emissions of volatile solvent into the lab.

CEOCFO: *Have people been looking to address this problem?*

Ms. Najafi: Let me tell why we invented this product. In 1996, my husband Dr. Ron Najafi (a PhD organic chemist) was working in his laboratory and he noticed something that other scientists seemed to overlook. He first noticed that waste solvent containers were typically left open in fume hoods, even over weekends. By Monday morning, almost a third of the solvent had evaporated into the laboratory fumehood. To test the speed of evaporation, he put a mark on the open container on Friday afternoon. When he returned to work on Monday, a lot of the solvent was gone. He realized that this was potentially a big problem and an opportunity to create a product that can prevent this from happening. These solvents are quite hazardous and having them dissipate into the fume hood meant that the chemists and lab workers were basically breathing this chemical all day and could develop serious health problems through continuous exposure. Keep in mind that fume-hood exhaust gets spread out on top of a building. It contaminates the clean air and then comes back into the lab and office buildings. Ron is always looking for ways to make things better, so he decided to invent a solution that would prevent chemical fumes from getting into the lab, ensuring that no workers would be exposed to these hazardous chemicals. This is why he created ECO Funnel.

We actually worked on the development and design of ECO Funnel together, including variations that could be used with

different sizes of common waste containers. Most of the time, we worked out of the basement of our house in San Francisco, California. Since Ron worked at a pharmaceutical company, and we knew that this product would offer a unique solution to a common problem, we decided to make a business out of it and sell it to companies with similar situations. That is how CP Lab Safety was created. Founded on our signature product, we expanded over the years and now we have over eighty thousand products focused on the health and safety of workers and the environment. Our mission is to keep people healthy, safe and productive, while safeguarding the environment at the same time.

CEOCFO: *We came upon your company from your new chemical feed product. What products have you developed?*

Ms. Najafi: Our chemical feed safety clamps serve the same purpose as our ECO Funnel, preventing chemicals from escaping from the drums. They also prevent cross-contamination and just make chemical feeds safer and easier overall. We also developed a solid waste container, which is a convenient benchtop container with a lid that can collect contaminated hazardous solid waste. This product features a similar lid design to ECO Funnel.

CEOCFO: *How do you decide what products to work on or what areas might need attention that you could help?*

Ms. Najafi: The focus of our products is to reduce the emission of solvent into the environment, which in turn helps reduce exposure of personnel to hazardous chemicals. Additionally, our products reduce the chance of fire, because no flammable fumes are being emitted. For products that we distribute, our focus is general health and safety. We are interested in any product that adds safety and convenience to a job. Those products range from spill kits and secondary containment to safety cabinets and modular safety buildings. Our company focuses on improving health & safety, both for people and the environment.

CEOCFO: *How did you decide on this latest product? How do you know what you want to work on next? How do you assess where there is a need?*

Ms. Najafi: Well, we listen to our customers. Of course, one of the best way to create new product is to improve on the existing products. People often reach out to us with a difficult problem, and we help them develop a solution. We actually manufacture more than one hundred different products, most of which developed as a response to customer feedback. We try to either improve our current products to fit their needs or create new ones. That is basically how we get ideas of what to create.

CEOCFO: *What is the competitive landscape? Are there many companies developing products and also carrying the type of inventory you do with a wide range of products?*

Ms. Najafi: There are tons of products that are focused on safety, so we have plenty of competition. Thankfully, we have a unique product line to keep us competitive. The industry knows that CP Lab Safety is the manufacturer of ECO Funnel and customers either buy it directly from us or from various distributors in the United States and worldwide. We export our products to China, Korea, Japan, Israel, Europe and a number of South American countries. Our ECO Funnel line of products is available through large distributors like Fisher Scientific, VWR, Chemglass Life Sciences, etc.

CEOCFO: *How long does one product last? Are there disposable components?*

Ms. Najafi: The product lasts for a long time. Believe it or not, I have seen companies that have our first generation ECO Funnel, which is from decades ago! ECO Funnels and drum feed clamps can last many years, depending on usage. If they are used regularly with highly corrosive chemicals then they may only last for a year, since even strong plastics are subject to chemical degradation. However, if they're used infrequently or with noncorrosive chemicals, they can last for several years. The chemical feed clamps have inner filters that should be replaced regularly, but the outer clamp can last a lifetime.

CEOCFO: *Do you do much advertising or promotion or do people in the various industries know ECO Funnel now?*

Ms. Najafi: We attend trade shows and we have a loyal client base that comes to us for all kind of products. We offer competitive pricing and frequent promotions, as well as free shipping, which people love.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about government sales and government interaction?*

Ms. Najafi: We regularly sell to government agencies. The NIH is one of our customers and purchases our products. The EPA was one of our first customers. The FDA, local and state laboratories such as Sandia National Labs, Oakridge National Labs and Lawrence Livermore National Labs... they all use our ECO Funnel.

CEOCFO: *What is different about ECO Funnel today? You mentioned that you had a number of versions. How is it better today?*

Ms. Najafi: We have a large selection of ECO Funnel products today. Originally we only had one ECO Funnel in two sizes (4" and 8") but it only fit standard 4 liter lab bottles with a 38mm neck. Now, we have ECO Funnels designed to fit most containers used in the lab, from small 2 liter containers to giant 55 gallon drums. We expanded the line to provide containers and also EPA compliant secondary containers. Today we offer custom ECO Funnels too, with a special adapter, so we can often fit containers with non-standard openings. For example, we have a distributor in Spain that uses a specific container, and we custom manufacture our ECO Funnel to fit their container. We also customize fittings to the side of ECO Funnel so customers can attach waste lines directly from their HPLC machines.

CEOCFO: *Where do you manufacture? Do you maintain much inventory?*

Ms. Najafi: Most of our products are made in the USA. We use a local manufacturing company in Northern California and keep our inventory in our Novato, California warehouse. Therefore, most of our ECO Funnels, Drum Clamps and Solid Waste Containers are in-stock and ready to ship the same day.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as CP Lab Safety has grown and evolved as a company?*

Ms. Najafi: What surprised me is that more and more companies are caring about environment and the safety of their employees. Our ECO Funnel sales have grown significantly because of this new awareness. Companies actually care about reducing the exposure of their workers to hazardous chemicals now, when there wasn't much interest back in 1996 when we started the company, or even awareness of the problem.

When we started, most companies were not willing to invest in our product because, at the time, they could essentially let their chemicals evaporate or pour them down the drain without any obvious ramifications. At that time they would say, "Why should we pay for a device to contain the chemicals (and then pay again for proper disposal) when we can simply evaporate it into the air?" Thankfully, the EPA and Fire Marshals started cracking down on hazardous waste emission violators. Today, companies need to comply with safety regulations or they face fines. Also, more and more companies actively care about protecting the health of their employees. They purchase ECO Funnel both to handle their hazardous waste properly, and also to protect the health of their people. I would say the increased awareness coupled with good-old-fashion enforcement has helped us tremendously.

CEOCFO: *What is next for CP Lab Safety?*

Ms. Najafi: Our core values focuses on reducing worker exposure to hazardous chemicals and protecting the environment. We will continue to do what we believe in, and make new products or improve existing products that accomplishes that mission!