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**PORT PROMOTES BENAVIDEZ TO SECURITY, SAFETY DIRECTOR**

**FREEPORT, Texas (October 8, 2008)** – Rick Benavidez, who joined Port Freeport in September 2004 as Port Security Manager, has been promoted to the position of Director of Security and Safety.

In his new position, Benavidez is continuing to advance numerous projects to make certain that Port Freeport meets or surpasses federal and state security requirements, and he also is engaged in strategic planning and day-to-day efforts to ensure that the highest safety standards are in effect at the Port.

Since Benavidez came aboard at the Port, numerous security enhancements have been made, including the opening of a new port security command center, installation of a closed-circuit television surveillance system and the addition of a security boat and two specially equipped security vehicles. The Port also has installed a Port-wide radar and automatic identification system that detects vessels as they approach from 35 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico.

Most recently, Benavidez has been instrumental in securing federal grants totaling more than \$3.2 million that are enabling Port Freeport to add a Gate 4 access control facility; initiate training exercises for the entire Port community; and implement redundant communications connectivity between the ports of Freeport, Galveston, Houston and, eventually, Texas City.

Benavidez is an FBI National Academy graduate with more than two decades of law enforcement and security experience. Prior to joining Port Freeport, he was site contract security coordinator at the BASF Corp. facility in Freeport. Last year, he earned his Certified Protection Professional designation from the American Society of Industrial Security.

He and his wife, Cathy, have three children and are members of Willow Drive Baptist Church in Lake Jackson.

“Rick is a proven professional and a tremendous addition to our senior staff,” said Port Freeport Executive Port Director/CEO A.J. “Pete” Reixach Jr. “We are quite fortunate to have a person of his caliber.”

Port Freeport currently ranks 14<sup>th</sup> among U.S. ports in international cargo tonnage handled. With a current channel of 45-foot depth, soon to be widened and deepened, just 3 miles from open Gulf of Mexico waters, Port Freeport offers more than 7,500 acres for future development. Port Freeport serves its customers and stakeholders through development and marketing of competitive world-class navigational capabilities, technically advanced marine and multimodal terminal services and port-related industrial facilities while achieving profits and creating jobs as a leading economic catalyst for the Texas Gulf Coast.

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