

Dispersed Work Sites Are Not a Barrier to Communication

CONOCO CASE STUDY

A Focus on People Results in Zero Incidents



Safety Training and Safety Audits Help Prevent Injuries at Conoco's North Sea Operations

Challenge

The ConocoPhillips company has a long and solid tradition of safety at work. Conoco's products range from crude oil, natural gas and natural gas liquids to refined products, such as motor oil, other lubricants and petroleum coke.

The company is committed to protecting the health and safety of everyone who plays a part in their operations, lives in the communities in which they operate or uses their products. Wherever they operate, Conoco intends to conduct business with respect and care for both the local and global environment and systematically manage risks to drive sustainable business growth. Conoco is not satisfied until it succeeds in eliminating all injuries, occupational illnesses, unsafe practices and incidents of environmental harm from their activities.

Solution

In 1998, with the help of DuPont, the goal of zero incidents became reality for the 425 employees of ConocoPhillips Limited in the U.K. Not only had there been zero lost-time incidents, but zero days of restricted activity and zero medical treatment cases. In other words, the total recordable rate was 0.00.

This safety record was the result of focusing on a number of basic principles:

- All injuries and occupational illnesses can be prevented.
- People are the most important element in an effective safety program.
- All employees are responsible for their own safety and for the safety of their colleagues.
- The entire management line has a special responsibility for preventing injuries.



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The Conoco approach to safety focused on people. That's because a study has shown that unsafe acts are the cause of 96 percent of all incidents at work, whereas only four percent are related to technical causes. Because the attitude of employees is essential to working safely, it is necessary to demonstrate the company's commitment to safety and to ensure that employees adopt this commitment as their very own. At Conoco U.K., safety is placed at the top of the agenda of every staff meeting, and all employees — both onshore and offshore — as well as contractors, participate in regularly scheduled safety meetings.

Alaister McIntosh, manager for Safety, Environmental and Quality Assurance of Conoco's U.K. Upstream Operations (i.e., exploration and production), points out that these safety meetings have greatly contributed to improving communications between Conoco managers, employees and contracting companies. This is especially important for those working far away from the "mother company" on the offshore platforms.

"We have a structure of safety representation that works all the way through the company. On an offshore platform, it starts with the Platform Individual Constituency Safety Meetings. Matters that are not resolved at that level cascade up into the Platform Safety Committee, the Safety and Environmental Action Committee, and finally the Central Safety and Environmental Committee, which is comprised of our management team and chaired by our managing director, George Watkins," explained McIntosh.

Results

Because of management's special responsibility for preventing injuries, all Conoco supervisors are personally involved in safety training and safety audits. These audits are an integral part of safety management on platforms and contractor-operated drilling units. During an audit, a manager will stop and talk with an employee, rather than rush by. This demonstrates the manager's concern for safety. In a DuPont-style safety audit, the auditor's attention focuses on employees. When an unsafe act is observed, both auditor and employee jointly try to determine the reason for this at-risk behavior and discuss a safer way of doing the job.



In addition, the observation skills of Conoco's employees are enhanced with the help of the DuPont Safety Training Observation Program™ (STOP™). This behavior modification program is founded on basic safety principles and proven observation techniques. Its objective is to enable all employees to recognize and eliminate unsafe acts and at-risk conditions in the workplace.

The great attention given to the observation of unsafe acts is due to the fact that if they go unnoticed, they will sooner or later lead to incidents. This is why not only incidents, but also near misses are reported and investigated at Conoco U.K. "We classify incidents into four categories, dependent on their severity. Incidents of all four categories are reported, and our aim is to see the severe ones reducing in percentage terms of the total number. Our vision is that we want to be able to look back and see not one, but consecutive years with no lost-time incidents," noted McIntosh.



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