

Safe Work Permits Don't Ensure Safe Work—Procedures

- Failure to consider safety in the change process
- Urgency takes precedent over safety

BACKGROUND

Issuing safe work permits were activities used to help ensure the hazardous work was fully prepared before any work began. In a large facility, these permits (e.g. Safe Work, General Work, Hot Work, Confined Space Entry, Line Breaking, and others) had been issued by the on-duty operators.

The very large number of permits being sought at the beginning of day shift would overwhelm the board operator and completely distract him from running the equipment. To address this problem, the company appointed a set of permit approvers especially for this “rush hour.”

WHAT HAPPENED

These approvers were three other Operations personnel, who sat in a conference room in the control room building. Workers seeking permits lined up to see one of these three approvers. The approvers reviewed the permit presented to them and then signed. This allowed them to work very efficiently, allowing day shift work to begin.

However, the three permit approvers never left the conference room during this process. They cannot from there observe the physical location of the work, and in their rush to issue permits they asked only cursory questions of the permittees.

What cultural gap allowed the Safe Work Permit process to go from bad to worse?

SAFETY CULTURE FOCUS

- ✓ Strong leadership avoids sacrificing safety for production.
- ✓ A questioning environment is critical when process or procedure changes are made to identify potential risks.
- ✓ Failure to consult system experts can undermine process safety.

****Only 51% of those surveyed indicated procedures were a strength in their organization.****

IMPROVING HYDROGEN SAFETY CULTURE

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FROM OTHER'S EXPERIENCES

***“Safety culture is how the organization behaves...
...when no one is watching.”***

Safety Culture Framework

- ▶ Safety is everyone's responsibility
- ▶ Strong leadership support
- ▶ Integrated into all activities
- ▶ Open, timely, effective communications
- ▶ Questioning/learning environment
- ▶ Mutual trust
- ▶ Continuous improvement

What are the benefits?

- ✓ Eliminates common weaknesses identified as contributing factors to catastrophic events.
- ✓ Promotes trust in the hydrogen energy industry's ability to deliver safe, reliable, quality products and services.
- ✓ Supports a sustainable legacy for companies and the hydrogen industry.
- ✓ Fosters efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

Resources

- ✓ For further information and resources on safety culture, see: <https://www.aiche.org/ccps/safety-culture-what-stake>
- ✓ For further case studies on safety culture, see: <https://h2tools.org>