

Succession and Success—Process Safety

- Negative safety trends gain attention
- Improvements distracted by business focus shift
- Deterioration in safety culture leads to fatalities and injuries

BACKGROUND

A Vice President of Operations of a company, a long-time employee well-steeped in the company safety culture, noticed that process safety leading indicators and near-miss metrics were beginning to trend negatively across the company. While the trend was not strong, the Vice President called a global meeting of safety and operations leaders that all were required to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to develop an action plan to ensure the unfavorable trend did not continue and the company could get back to its previous performance.

WHAT HAPPENED

Not long afterward, the company shifted the focus of its business. Coincidentally, the Vice President of Operations retired. The new Vice President was challenged by the business shift and may have been distracted from the predecessor's process safety action plan. After a few more years and more staff changes, the company experienced a cluster of major and minor incidents involving injuries and fatalities that would have been unheard of just a few years later. Over the next few years, incidents began cropping up at many sites, and to many, the company's process safety culture appeared to have collapsed.

Was the departure of the Vice President the critical factor, or had the culture become so weakened that it would have collapsed even with that Vice President's leadership? What was the true state of culture when the metrics trend first started to go negative? Could the culture have already collapsed, and could the absence of frank and open communication have prevented the well-meaning Vice President from knowing about it until it was too late?

Did the company truly have an imperative for safety, or was its reputation built on a few very visible safety champions? Could the imperative for safety been focused on occupational safety and not enough on process safety? Could the Vice President's successors have talked-the-talk about process safety, but not exhibited "Felt Leadership?"

SAFETY CULTURE FOCUS

- ✓ Strong leadership must ensure timely and effective communication as an element of the succession process.
- ✓ Maintaining a sense of vulnerability and a questioning environment is essential to identifying and mitigating risk.
- ✓ Everyone is responsible for safety and must be empowered to achieve continuous improvement.

****Only 37% of those surveyed indicated management involvement was 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>