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Employee Involvement in Health and Safety: Some Examples of Good Practice

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY MANGEMENT AND TYPES OF EXAMPLES BEING SOUGHT	3
3 POLICY	4
3.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in The Development of a Health and Safety Policy	4
3.2 An Example of Employee Involvement in the Development of a Safety Charter.....	4
4 ORGANISING.....	6
4.1 Control	6
4.2 Communication	7
4.3 Competence	11
4.4 Co-operation	14
5. PLANNING	16
5.1 Health & Safety Plans	16
5.2 Risk Assessment	18
5.3 Design of Work Processes	19
5.4 Procurement	20
5.5 Design of Systems of Work	21
5.6 Problem Solving	22
5.7 Operation of Risk Control Systems	23
6. MEASUREMENT	24
6.1 Active Monitoring	24
6.2 Reactive Monitoring: Accident/Near Miss Investigation	25
6.3 Reactive Monitoring: Hazard Spotting	25

7. AUDIT & REVIEW	27
7.1 An Example of Employee Involvement	
In Auditing the Health and Safety System	27

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of organisations who contributed to report	28
Appendix 2: Press Release	29

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to obtain examples of how organisations have actively involved their employees in health and safety. The examples sought needed to:

- represent the six main elements of health and safety management as described in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication HSG-65 ‘Successful health and safety management’¹ and
- represent different types of industry and working practices.

The report provides *some* examples of how to involve employees in health and safety. They are not the *only* way to achieve effective employee involvement but provide information which may be useful to other organisations seeking to promote employee involvement.

Background

The publication HSG-65 ‘Successful health and safety management’, is a practical guide for directors, managers, health and safety professionals and employee representatives who want to improve health and safety in their organisations. It:

- describes the principles and management practices which provide the basis of effective health and safety management;
- sets out the issues which need to be addressed, and
- can be used for developing improvement programmes, self audit and self assessment.

HSG-65 discusses the key elements of successful health and safety management under five main headings:

- Policy;
- Organising;
- Planning;
- Measuring Performance;
- Auditing and Reviewing Performance.

The examples gathered through this research have been matched against these five categories. Section 2 of this report defines each category in more detail, with a description of the type of examples being sought.

Methodology

The organisations involved in this study were initially a self-selected sample which had responded to a HSE press release (see appendix 2) advertised in a variety of publications. This press release sought examples of good practice in employee involvement in health and safety.

Organisations which responded to the press release were asked to provide an outline of their given example. This initial information was considered against the five categories of health and safety management and a decision made as to which examples were worth exploring further.

¹Successful health and safety management. HSG 65. HSE Books 1997. ISBN 0717612767

An interview schedule was designed to obtain the necessary details from each example. Organisations with promising examples were then contacted by telephone and either interviewed over the telephone or face-to-face during a visit. These organisations were asked to provide as much additional written evidence as possible (e.g. company literature, safety policy statements) to support the facts obtained during the interviews. A number of examples were then selected for inclusion in the report.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all those organisations who responded to the press release and in particular those organisations which provided the examples described in this report (see appendix 1 for list of organisations).

2. SUMMARY OF KEY ELEMENTS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND TYPES OF EXAMPLES BEING SOUGHT

KEY ELEMENTS OF TYPES OF EXAMPLES BEING SOUGHT HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT	
POLICY	Workforce involvement in development or re-view of policy statement
ORGANISING ⇒Control ⇒Communication ⇒Competence ⇒co-operation	Giving employees specific health & safety responsibilities. Employee involvement in delivering health & safety messages Employee involvement in delivery and design of training Structure of Safety Committees Suggestion Schemes
PLANNING ⇒objectives/plans ⇒risk assessments ⇒procurement ⇒design ⇒problem solving ⇒operation of risk control systems	Employee involvement in setting health and safety plans/objectives Employee involvement in risk assessments Employee involvement in the procurement of equipment/materials etc Employee involvement in design of new ways of working Employee involvement in problem solving Employee involvement in planning risk control systems
MEASUREMENT ⇒active monitoring ⇒reactive monitoring	Employee involvement in carrying out inspections, observations etc. Employee involvement in accident and near miss investigations and hazard spotting
AUDIT & REVIEW	Employee involvement in audits of the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the H&S system and in the systematic review of performance based on data from monitoring and audits.

3. POLICY

Policy: the general intentions, approach and objectives - the vision - of an organisation and the criteria and principles upon which it bases its actions.

3.1 AN EXAMPLE OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Employee involvement was part of a company's attempt to develop a quality assurance system. The development of this quality system itself was carefully planned in stages. Volunteers underwent three days of training in procedure writing, then identified and produced the necessary procedures. However, the existing safety management system also needed improvement. The workforce had not been involved in its conception and there was little understanding amongst both management and employees. It was decided therefore to adopt the same approach as for the quality system, with the eventual aim of bringing the two systems together.

With careful planning and using fully trained safety representatives, the company began rewriting the policy statement and developing their own safety procedures to meet the company's specific needs. The policy statement was produced in consultation with the workforce, and continuous feedback was encouraged. These safety procedures have now been incorporated into the Company Procedures Manual.

3.2 AN EXAMPLE OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SAFETY CHARTER

Two companies which had previously operated as one site under the same management structure were separated as part of a business reorganisation. The management of one of the new sites wanted to involve the safety representatives in producing a Safety Charter. These safety representatives were asked to help develop the Health and Safety Committee (HESAC) into a safety team with common goals and expectations, in line with the company 'Vision'.

The HESAC developed the Safety Charter. It included eleven management representatives, nine trade union appointed safety representatives and the Occupational Health Advisor. They were brought together for a series of one day off-site workshops, with the aim of developing the 'team' and formulating a set of 'values' and a 'mission'. These workshops led to the Safety Charter, which identified Charter Values such as:

- safety is the number one priority.
- safety of everyone is your responsibility - lead by example.
- we adopt a questioning attitude and do not take risks.
- we acknowledge and act upon reported events.
- we recognise good performance and safety initiatives.
- we consider the welfare of others at all times.

Each of these Charter Values has a nominated sponsor who is a member of the Executive Team, and their role is to ensure that any actions related to that Value are carried out. The Safety Charter has now been adopted by the company across the United Kingdom, and employees and contractors have been involved in producing a site video detailing the Safety Charter Values.

The HESAC also developed the Safety Enhancement Plan, which encourages correct safety culture on site through the adoption of certain practices. The Plan identifies actions to improve health and safety grouped under the various Safety Charter Values. Employees are reminded that it is ‘everyone’s plan’ and although generated by the HESAC it relies on everyone’s participation. The plan contains a feedback sheet, and all staff and contractors are encouraged to use this facility to share ideas and concerns. An extract from the Safety Enhancement Plan states that: “*the clear intention is to seek continual improvement through the development of a safety culture built on a common understanding of safety and a commitment by all staff to meet their challenging goals*”

4. ORGANISING

Organising: having an effective management structure and arrangements in place for delivering policy (HSG65)

4.1. CONTROL

4.1.1. An Example of Giving Employees Specific Health and Safety Responsibilities

A joint venture between two companies employing up to 1,400 operatives was struggling with their health and safety. Their accident statistics were poor, and, since the joint venture, they had been prosecuted twice by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Both companies decided to raise their employees' awareness of health and safety following advice from HSE Inspectors.

Two Safety Task Teams were set up, each with ten employees and a team leader. The team leader was selected for displaying responsibility and a caring attitude, and team members were rotated as needed, in order to ensure a wide range of ideas and input. The members of the Safety Task Teams represented a cross-section of age, supervisory skills and engineering experience.

The enthusiasm of teams members for promoting safe practice was regarded by senior management as critical to the success of the Safety Task Teams. The Safety Task Teams met every two weeks to devise a means of measuring safety performance and publish the results. Every month, team members presented the results and discussed and agreed new initiatives with the Project Director and the section Project Managers.

Every fortnight, the Safety Task Team members were given half a day to carry out site safety inspections, supported by the Project Director. The Safety Task Teams were given the authority to issue vouchers to employees and sub-contractors who demonstrated exceptional safety behaviour or gave suggestions.

The teams were also a general point of contact for other employees, providing the opportunity to discuss their concerns with their fellow workers, and ensuring these concerns were followed up and actioned. Minor health and safety issues could be actioned by the section manager, but the majority went through the Health and Safety Manager and Project Director. It was unusual however for a suggestion to be rejected at this level, because the two Safety Task Teams usually succeeded in formulating an effective solution to a problem.

Subcontractors were also included in the Safety Task Teams, and discussed health and safety issues with the permanent workforce. This ensured that any problems arising from work activities were identified by both subcontractors and employees.

'The commitment came from the Project Director - he wanted it to happen and the people involved in the Safety Task Team were given the time to do things properly' (Safety Manager).

Examples of problem solving through the Safety Task Team/Employee Suggestions include:

Fire boxes: Fire boxes had been built to prevent fire extinguishers from being mis-used. The fire boxes were all red which made it difficult to identify the extinguisher medium. The company had put bands around them to identify them as foam or water. Through the Safety Task Team, an operative suggested painting them with the appropriate colour to ease identification in an emergency.

COSHH buckets: Bags of cement were being left open, resulting in the release of potentially harmful dust particles and wastage. Buckets were introduced as a result of an idea from the Safety Task Team. These buckets had a sealable lid and, when full, did not weigh more than 25kg. They were marked with COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) warning stickers and placed in a designated safe area.

'Most of the good ideas come from the operatives because they are the ones who get frustrated with having to deal with certain situations day in and day out' (Safety Task Team Leader)

Benefits of Safety Task Teams : As a result of the Safety Task Teams, the companies achieved a remarkable reduction in reportable accident rates:

- A decline from 1.2 to 0.1 per 100,000 man hours over 12 months.
- Manual handling accidents were reduced from 4.5 to 3.2 per 100,000 man hours.
- Accidents resulting from poor access and egress (i.e. slips, trips and falls) were reduced from 4.0 to 2.0 per 100,000 man hours.
- The company worked 1.6m man hours with only one RIDDOR accident.

Most importantly, awareness of hazards was increased substantially. There was:

- a notable improvement in hazard awareness and in accident preventive action by all employees;
- a perceived increase in productivity of employees who took pride in their achievements;
- a general improvement in morale and the relationship between the workforce and management team.

Top Tips from Management:

'Need to have visible demonstrated commitment from the top - once the workforce see that commitment they will be willing to participate. Managers need to be seen'.

'Need to provide time and resources to the teams'

4.2 COMMUNICATION

4.2.1 An Example of Involving Employees in the Activities and Planning of an Annual Safety Week

A large company with around 4,000 employees has introduced an annual Safety Week across all of their sites. The aim of this Safety Week is to focus the attention of all employees on health and safety activities and issues. The Safety Week has now been running for three years, and each site decides upon its own programme and structure. Not all Safety Week activities are specifically related to work activities. Some are intended to raise general awareness of health and safety in the home

and away from work, with the aim of increasing employees' awareness and promoting interest in health and safety whilst at work.

The Safety Manager at one site, supported by site management, wanted to create activities for Safety Week which would capture the imagination of the workforce. This site has won the Safety Week Award for the past three years and willing employees work together in small teams prior to the Safety Week to come up with ideas and plan events.

An important contributor to the success of this site is the inclusion of an innovative main event which attracts people to the other activities and display stands: *'a catalyst which sparks some thought and imagination and interest, and the rest of it then takes care of itself'*. Health and safety activities and stands have included Lifestyle Screening, Safety in the Home, a Safe Driving Course and CPR (Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation), while the successful main events have been:

Fire Brigade Smoke Room Two community Fire Brigade Officers set up a smoke room on the packaging plant site. Employees attended a presentation and discussion of recent experiences of fire at home and at the plant and were then led through a maze into the smoke room. This had a huge impact on the workers and the Safety Manager stated that *'from the very word go it got people switched on'*

First Aid Demonstration The First Aid Team used a number of actors from the workforce to simulate and demonstrate the variety of situations which First Aiders could face.

Who wants to be a (Safety) Millionaire Quiz ? The site recreated the setting of the television quiz and asked safety questions. Although there was only one contestant at a time there was still active participation from an audience of around 300 workers all shouting out the answers, with a prize for the winners.

Management at this site believe that the level of commitment required to achieve the involvement of 500 employees in a packaging plant, especially when the date of the Safety Week has sometimes been the plant's busiest time, has been worth the effort: there has been an increase in awareness of health and safety and an increase in the expectation amongst the workforce of management delivering health and safety.

Top Tips from the Safety Management Team:

"Be up front and talk to people"

"Once you have involved employees, you have to take on board what they are saying and use their ideas - you can't partially involve them. There is a risk involved but you have to go for it. You can't be seen to be ignoring employees. Employees have to see that their involvement has influenced its outcome. If an idea is wrong, fine, but go back and explain to that person why it is not a good idea".

4.2.2 Modifying the Safety Week in Order to Involve Desk-bound Employees Effectively in Communicating Health and Safety Issues Through the Safety Plus Initiative.

The majority of the employees at one particular site in the company who run the Safety Week (see 4.2.1) are desk-based for most of the day. Feedback from the traditional Safety Week at this site revealed that although employees wanted to

take part in the various activities, they found it difficult to leave their desks for half an hour to participate because of their workload. The site came up with the Safety Plus Initiative as a way of spreading the activities of Safety Week across a longer period, whilst still keeping people interested.

The Safety Plus Initiative is one overall activity split into smaller sub units, combining all health and safety topics together as one and raising the awareness of health and safety. The main aim of the Safety Plus Initiative is to encourage and reward staff for participating in various awareness-raising activities. The incentive behind the initiative is a safety league, with employees getting points for taking part in each activity. A league table runs through to the end of the year, incorporating the points from all the different sessions, and, at the end of the year, the top three get a prize.

Each month is devoted to a specific topic which is relevant to the site, and any presentations or activity is spread over four weeks to allow for maximum participation. The company have deliberately kept compulsory items like accidents reporting, hazard surveys and housekeeping performances out of the scheme, as these are an expected part of the job. Training can be a mixture of either formal or informal training depending upon the subject: quizzes and competitions (paper and PC-based) are used as support where possible, with the aim being to make them 'fun' and relatively quick to complete. If employees attend the various sessions/activities it also serves as evidence for the objective of commitment to Health & Safety in the performance management system.

Activities which took place as part of Safety Plus Initiative in 1997 included:

- a true/false general Health and Safety Quiz.
- a Spot the Hazard Competition where ten hazards were deliberately set up in an office which was then photographed;
- Fire Safety Training Sessions;
- a Safety Sign Competition, where entrants had to identify correctly the meanings of ten hazard safety signs currently used on site;
- ten multiple choice questions covering actions and responsibilities when dealing with contractors following a rebriefing on the Control of Contractors and Safety of Visitors and,
- a competition to test individuals' knowledge of the effects of excessive drinking together with rules on driving.

The company risk manager attended some of the sessions and believes that *"it is good for a busy site where people just can't afford a lot of time away from the job all at once, as there is less likelihood of missing certain sessions/aspects. The initiative is an example of how to get employees actively involved on a busy site, and was an award winner"*

A number of benefits of the Safety Plus Initiative have been identified:

- Staff are encouraged to participate rather than forced to attend. *"A willing participant will learn more than a conscript"* (Safety Manager);
- The focus on health and safety has been more visible;
- It allows staff to demonstrate their commitment to health and safety at appraisal time;

- It also allows managers to identify if any of their staff have a problem giving commitment to health and safety training and thus address the issues with the party concerned;
- It helps to keep health and safety in the forefront of people's minds and stimulates discussion.

4.3 COMPETENCE

4.3.1 An Example of Involving Employees in the Delivery and Design of Health and Safety Training Through Safety Champions

Safety Champions are an integral part of a large company's Safety Team Enterprise. Every employee is a member of a team within a business unit with responsibility to conduct its own work including quality, housekeeping and health and safety. Every team has a Safety Champion; a volunteer with an interest in health and safety who co-ordinates safe working in the area. This Safety Champion takes on an advisory role within the business unit, supported by the necessary training and information.

Safety Champions receive at least one more week of additional health and safety training than other employees and undertake training on a number of different modules as part of their Personal Work Plan. For example, general health and safety, fire marshal training, behavioural safety, workplace hazard spotting, workplace surveys. This training enables Champions to carry out their own workplace inspections, with a knowledge of specific health and safety issues such as Manual Handling and COSHH.

The Safety Champions assist with the inductions of new staff, deliver health and safety messages and carry out tool box talks. For example, a Safety Champion wanted to do a toolbox talk on manual handling and connected lifting techniques, so the Health and Safety Advisor put together a tool box talk pack and ensured the Safety Champions received the necessary training. One example of Safety Champions' involvement in health and safety activities is:

Use of Hand-Care Products The company wanted to change their hand-care products as the existing solvent based hand-care cream was causing skin problems. The workforce was involved in choosing the new product. The company who owned the chosen product came onto the site and carried out a training session with all the Safety Champions. The Safety Champions were provided with videos and 'do's and don't cards', and were given a bullet point list of the issues to include in their training sessions with their own teams.

Each Safety Champion gave a fifteen minute toolbox talk on the introduction of the new product to all the employees in their particular team. This training was carried out during the monthly 'quality time' session, when all work stops for two hours and employees discuss various issues. Employees were made aware of how to use the new products and dispensers during the presentation. The smooth introduction was due to the Safety Champions willingness to take on the responsibility of giving the toolbox talks, even though some of them had never given presentations before.

4.3.2 An Example of Involving Employees in the Delivery and Design of Health and Safety Training Through Sub-Committees.

The Health and Safety Committee (HESAC) at this site has been actively involved in encouraging more staff and contractor involvement through subcommittees. A manager chairs each subcommittee and membership is made up from a cross-section of day and shift staff as well as contractors. The company believes that this arrangement results in the effective joint delivery of their safety enhancement pro-

grammes. Examples of health and safety initiatives resulting from these HESAC sub-committees are:

Safety Walks Safety walks are a combination of the previous Management Safety Tours and Safety Representatives Site Inspections. A typical safety walk team includes a station director/departmental manager, safety representative, shift charge engineer and a team leader. In areas such as the contractor compounds, contractors now form part of the inspection team.

Contractors HESAC Regular monthly meetings supplementary to the normal HESACs take place and are used as a forum for promoting common values among employees.

Stress Awareness A small group of employees put together a weeks programme of activities to help raise awareness of how to recognise colleagues who may be suffering from stress. Videos were shown, management went on walkabouts and a training programme for team leaders was delivered.

Personal Protective Equipment Awareness A HESAC sub-group, with backing from management, developed and delivered a health and safety awareness campaign for PPE.

Risk Assessment Awareness A small sub group of the HESAC developed and delivered a programme of risk assessment awareness, including a simulation exercise for all staff and contractors.

4.3.3 An Example of Involving Employees Through Cascade Training of Safety Representatives

The new Risk Manager at a company realised that one fire advisor and one manual handling co-ordinator could not possibly train 3,500 staff. His initial idea of getting the managers of each unit to carry out the training was not feasible because of their already existing work load and responsibilities, and there was a need to identify who else had the potential to assist with the training.

It was decided that any member of staff could be trained as a safety representative, and many of those appointed did not have line management responsibility. Staff are either nominated by the department manager or volunteer for the role and receive training from the Risk Manager and the Manual Handling Trainer. Very few of the safety representatives are union representatives. The scheme as a whole is supported by the unions, as it involves providing appropriate training for those involved. The site currently has about 25 union appointed representatives and about 250 management appointed safety representatives.

“In all cases appropriate training time and administrative facilities must be given to such representatives to allow them to fulfil their functions” (Health and Safety Arrangements)

The safety representatives assist the managers in Statutory/Mandatory Compliance, supported by appropriate training in risk management, managing safety, risk assessment and fire safety. Each safety representative is identified as an instructor in a particular area of responsibility and released for initial and twelve monthly update training. In all there are:

- 110 Fire Safety Representatives;

- 30 Manual Handling Co-ordinators; and
- 60 Manual Handling Work-based Trainers

The safety representatives are responsible for carrying out relevant training as and when required, including fire safety and manual handling. For example, an extract from the policy for safety representatives who are “moving and handling instructors” states that:

After receiving training moving and handling instructors will be able to :

- 1) *Coach and train staff in workplace and ensure training matrices are completed for each member of staff.*
- 2) *Promote the use of appropriate mechanical and other handling equipment.*
- 3) *Encourage the continuous use of correct posture and back care.*
- 4) *Monitor, coach and counsel to maintain the use of the correct manual handling skills.*
- 5) *Together with the Line Managers carry out an annual appraisal/competence check of all staff and update training records.*
- 6) *Assist Managers in carrying out Manual Handling Risk Assessments.*
- 7) *Attend annual refresher training. All trainers who have not attended a refresher within 2 ½ years will be expected to retrain by attending a further Instructors course.*

Safety performance and training is monitored by the safety representatives themselves, providing a feeling of ownership of the process, although managers still monitor the work of the safety representatives. The safety representatives also contribute information towards the health and safety aspect of the annual report.

Reportable accidents and litigation claims at this site have halved, due to the policy introduced and the training provided.

4.4 CO-OPERATION

4.4.2 *An Example of Co-Operation Through a Safety Partnership.*

The idea of creating a Health and Safety Partnership between union representatives and management was presented to senior management by the senior union safety representative due to the need to improve the existing poor relationships on site. The partnership was formed through an extensive discussion process and a formal written policy and agreement is being drafted. The function of these is to ensure that any issue relating to health and safety is thoroughly discussed with the safety representatives. The safety representatives are now involved in a number of safety initiatives, and these are all carried out in full consultation with management.

Teams have been set up to carry out risk assessments. The teams include safety representatives who act in an advisory capacity and also operators. After carrying out risk assessments, the teams discuss what action is required in order to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. The safety representatives then action the area supervisor to ensure the actions are completed. All operators have attended a one day risk assessment course held on site by the Safety Co-ordinator: *'Operators are the best people to carry out risk assessments as they do the tasks and so know the risk'*(Safety Co-ordinator).

4.4.2 *An Example of Co-Operation Through Safety Team Enterprise*

The proactive health and safety management culture or Safety Team Enterprise (STE) at a company is based on the four cornerstones of teamworking, structured empowerment, participation and training. The aims and objectives of STE include setting up teams as the basic building blocks for health and safety improvement, and fully empowering the workforce on becoming involved in health and safety issues through participation and delegation.

Teams are self managed and consist of up to sixteen people, with the roles of the team members linked to their annual objectives. Each team has a safety champion, a volunteer who co-ordinates safety working within the work area, and a safety communication board. Team members attend weekly health and safety forums, one of which is chaired by an employee. Minutes are produced as an action list and team members are actively encouraged to take ownership of health and safety and contribute through the Safety Champion or Team Leader to the Business Unit Health and Safety Improvement Plan.

Every employee also has the opportunity to carry out a risk assessment within the work area. Individual assessments are collated at team level to give a team-based evaluation which in turn gives valuable data for managers determining priorities for safety improvement plans. Individuals are empowered to put into place remedial actions, which, in turn, are monitored for completion by the weekly safety forum meetings of team representatives.

'It is just second nature to people now. Each unit has its own health and safety forum, they drive it themselves, if there is anything that can't be resolved then they can elevate it to the health and safety committee through either myself or the union representatives. People are just generally keen to mention things and get involved. It's like a continual ongoing process' (Health and Safety Advisor)

4.4.3 An Example of Co-operation Through an Employee Suggestion Scheme

The Brainwave Suggestion Scheme is a suggestion scheme for all aspects of this company's business, including health and safety. Suggestion forms are included in employees' work packs and are sent directly to the Managing Director. The suggestions received from the Brainwave suggestion scheme are discussed at the executive meetings once a month, and any employee who makes a suggestion must be kept informed of progress in writing. All brainwaves are acknowledged and processed to the respective managers who can either:

- make a recommendation for an award;
- advise the member of staff that the suggestion was not viable or practical; or
- recommend further action is undertaken on the suggestion.

An example of a successful brainwave suggestion is the creation of self-study tool box talks. Due to the peripatetic nature of the work and the difficulties involved in bringing large numbers of the workforce together. The company purchased a copy of the HSE publication 'Essentials of Health and Safety at Work'² for each of the operatives. An engineer recently qualified on IOSH Managing Safely course was selected to research and write up the question papers. These are then checked by the manager who retains overall responsibility. The engineer carries out this activity as part of his normal job. The engineer marks the papers for each individual and the marks are entered onto a safety database.

The company sees two main benefits of the self study tool box talks: they are easier to administer, and the returns for self study tool box talks have a significantly higher return and feedback than traditional tool box talks. The attendance at tool box talks averages at 76% whilst for self study exercises returns are at 92%. The company believes that the operatives actually get more from this exercise than the traditional tool box talks.

²Essentials of health and safety at work. HSE Books, 1999. ISBN 071760716X

5. PLANNING

Planning: having a planned and systematic approach to implementing the health and safety policy through an effective health and safety management system (HSG 65)

5.1 HEALTH & SAFETY PLANS

5.1.1 *An Example of Employee Involvement in the Development of a Five Year Health and Safety Plan.*

The development of a five year Health and Safety Plan was the fundamental part of a company's culture change programme, instigated as a result of management's determination to improve safety performance and achieve a world class safety standard. The aim of the health and safety plan was to encourage employee involvement in health and safety and to be able to control and predict health and safety spend.

The site had a strong union presence with a workforce who had become cynical towards new management health and safety initiatives. The company recognised the importance of actively involving the workforce in the creation and development of the five year health and safety plan as a means of ensuring the plan's success.

Approximately 40 willing employees were involved in designing the five year plan, representing just over 10% of the workforce. Four workshops took place, each one chaired by a senior manager. When the workshops first started, it was apparent that employees were very suspicious of the idea, and negative comments were directed towards management during the seminars.

During the workshops, the employees were divided into groups which had to prioritise and identify health and safety issues. If the group raised a problem, however small, they also had to think about how they would solve it; giving time-scales, costs and objectives. These concerns were then prioritised and potential solutions identified with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) objectives set against them.

All the points and safety issues raised from the workshops were recorded by the health and safety manager who produced a report. Each objective formed part of the overall health and safety plan. At the end of every workshop, there was an evaluation questionnaire, from which the majority of feedback was positive:

'all sessions were valuable as the people present were from all levels of the workforce and there is a commitment to improve safety throughout the work force'

'the cross section of people on the seminar voiced some very good points that need addressing in the future'

'I feel that I have made a valuable insight into health and safety and that my views were noted'

Once the ideas from the workshops had been incorporated into the plan, the 40 employees and management were asked to review it again and agree a final draft. Safety and union representatives were involved in the process and the local HSE Inspector gave a talk to unions and employees at the first draft plan review. It was then produced as a booklet and distributed to all employees.

Every employee on site had their picture displayed on the back page of the first health and safety plan booklet, to acknowledge their involvement and request their continued support. A free Health and Safety Plan mug, mouse mat and coaster were made available to every member of the workforce to promote awareness.

Each objective of the Plan is reviewed annually by an 'owner', a member of the management team. The owner is allocated a member of senior management as a mentor to provide support and guidance, and selects teams to plan actions for the year in line with the objective. These teams comprise shop floor personnel, engineers, safety representatives and safety management.

One of the main initiatives resulting from the plan was changing the format for health and safety meeting format. The workforce thought the meeting format no longer fulfilling the function for which it was designed and suggested replacing it by two health and safety development groups which focused on the two main plant areas of production and finishing. The remit of these groups was to introduce safety initiatives and develop safety within these two areas. Safety issues and problems are dealt with daily or highlighted through the use of the hazard/near miss reporting structure.

Other health and safety improvements which have been initiated as a result of the discussions which formed the plan include:

- a safety notice board placed at the site entrance which displays a monthly 'safety focus';
- open learning facilities for all employees; and
- an induction database for contractors.

The main benefit of this process has been a gradual change in culture and a break down of the barriers between the management and the workforce. There is now employee ownership of the business plan. It has also succeeded in '*hammering home the message that the site takes health and safety seriously*' (Safety Manager). The management hope that there will be a gradual reduction in accidents, with the overall aim being to make safety the number one priority for both management and the workforce.

'It was a hearts and minds thing; had to prove to these people that you were serious about it, because they had heard it all before' (Safety Manager)

Top Tip from the Safety Manager: *'Start the process early - it may necessitate an entire culture change'*

5.2 RISK ASSESSMENTS

5.2.1 *An Example of Employee Involvement in Conducting Risk Assessments*

A company wanted to improve their risk assessment system and developed a simple flow system based on the two documents '5 Steps to Risk Assessment'³ and 'Successful Health and Safety Management (HSG65)'. The new risk assessment model was developed by site management and the Group Safety, Health and Environment Manager, in consultation with the local HSE Inspector.

The company sought an approach which would ensure that the process was easy to manage, be suited to the type of business, provide a better result and be a useful tool in the management of health and safety.

The company needed somebody who, given the correct information on risk assessment, could assess hazards within the workplace and cover all activities throughout the business. On analysis of their previous risk assessments it was apparent that they had all been completed by one person (the health and safety manager) and there was no accountability or ownership of the risk assessments.

For their new approach, a team of Supervisors, Departmental Managers and representatives from Technical, Engineering and Night Hygiene teams, were taken away from their day-to-day tasks for one full week. This team included team leaders, one safety representative and one other employee. The members were either chosen or volunteered, although management required members who possessed a good working knowledge of their particular sections.

The team of twelve were provided with in-depth training at the start of the week, with training from the Group Health and Safety Manager on general risk assessments and issues relating to the specific risk assessment model being used. Safety representatives were present in an advisory capacity, offering health and safety advice. Team members were given support and advice as they identified hazards in the areas they were responsible for, assessed the risks and decided upon the actions required, identifying deadlines and people considered accountable for various actions.

Poster campaigns around the factory notified all personnel of Risk Assessment Week and team members. This encouraged all employees to get involved and help the team identify hazards and provide solutions.

The agenda set for the team during the week ensured that all members spent some time in every department, including those that they were not familiar with, to ensure all potential risks and hazards were identified.

The risk assessments generated a plan of action to reduce the hazards within the workplace and the management team monitored the effectiveness of the measures put in place in reducing the number of accidents.

Benefits The new risk assessment model has been in place since January 2000, and early indications suggest that there has already been a dramatic decrease in accident rates. There has also been a knock-on financial benefit in terms of reduced insurance costs due to the fall in accident rates.

³ 5 Steps to Risk Assessment. HSG-183. HSE Books. ISBN 0717615804

Improved communication now exists between management and safety representatives, with more proactive monthly committee meetings. Previously there had been a 'shopping list mentality' with safety representatives presenting lists of things which needed doing to management, with little discussion taking place.

There is ownership of the risk assessments by the people who carry out the tasks, as the solutions to preventing or minimising hazards are put forward by the people who were involved. The structured assessment of hazards in the workplace allows a committed management to achieve success in complying with legislation and developing best practice within the group.

5.2.2 An Example of Involving a Peripatetic Workforce in Completing Checklists and Conducting Risk Assessments

All 'planned' work activity carried out at this company has a health and safety plan because of the peripatetic nature of this business, with employees frequently working on other premises. There are also nine sets of workplace checklists for non-planned work, one for each specific business in the company.

'The 1,900 operatives can work in 500 work locations today, 700 different ones tomorrow, in every conceivable industry, location or workplace. Most of them work in ones and twos, and as such it is not feasible to have a supervisor with everyone in every workplace'(Safety Manager)

These risk assessments were developed through a consultation processes and working parties through the health and safety committee and health and safety groups. Through toolbox talks and training sessions conducted by the company, operatives understand the processes involved in risk assessments, and every operative is monitored to ensure that an on-site risk assessment is carried out for daily work activities.

The checklists ensure that health and safety issues are examined before work starts at a new site and are updated regularly through information gained through the hazard/near miss reports conducted by employees. The checklists are completed by the operatives on site who then use this information to conduct a risk assessment.

5.3 DESIGN OF WORK PROCESSES

5.3.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in the Design of Work Processes

Accident statistics showed that maintenance employees on a particular site were consistently having the most accidents. Safe systems of work were already in place and employees were given permits to carry out any job they did, but the site was still experiencing problems. It was apparent that the employees' approach to their work was that once they had been given the permit they felt safe and took little responsibility for their own safety. The company recognised that if they wanted to change the situation, they would have to engage employees in the safety process itself.

The company began the process by encouraging employees to identify personal safety issues and develop their own safe systems of work. Initially there was a lot of resistance and employees suspected management of trying to devolve responsibility onto operators and engineers. Middle management were also highly suspicious of the intentions. One of the prime responsibilities for management at this

time was issuing permits, and the removal of this responsibility was a matter of concern.

'It took many months to convince workers and management of what the safety management team was trying to achieve' (Safety Manager).

The new approach was introduced through a pilot group in one area of the site involving a small group of operators, engineers and a manager. The operators and engineers were asked to construct a list of their most common jobs. They all had training in risk assessments and carried these out on the most routine maintenance jobs e.g. repairing valves. Each shift took an area of the plant and did a risk assessment. Operators and maintenance crews helped develop a pro forma for writing out work instructions on how to conduct work safely.

This group of employees carried out the risk assessments, identified the hazards and the relevant control measures. After each work instruction was developed it was signed off by a manager to address the employees' concern over their legal liability, demonstrating that managers still took final responsibility for the system.

Maintenance crew and operators also had training in isolation procedures. This was a novel approach as both operators and maintenance crew were involved in the process, whereas previously there had always been conflict between the two groups. The operators and maintenance crew devised a system between themselves for isolation procedures. There was also a feedback process to the manager, and both groups remain actively involved in improving the isolation procedures. If there is a significant comment on a work instruction, the safety manager will discuss it with the maintenance manager and operator and decide if the work instruction requires upgrading. Both the operator and maintenance person complete the work instruction checklist and this is then displayed in the control room.

This system has been running for a few years, and it is constantly being updated and reviewed through employee feedback. The fact that the system was designed by the operator and maintenance teams has resulted in workforce pride and ownership of the whole system and decreased conflict between the two groups. The system is more time efficient than the old one and has contributed to a reduction in maintenance and first aid injuries since its introduction.

'It is a clear process through which employees have been involved in shaping their own work processes' (Safety Manager)

'There had been an element of risk that the operators and maintenance staff may cut corners and reduce standards of safety, but it was apparent that they had very high standards of safety' (Safety Manager)

5.4 PROCUREMENT

5.4.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in the Procurement of Equipment/Materials

The systems in the paints spraying area of a plant were to be changed and the company actively involved six painters in discussions about the new systems. The company was considering a new paint mixing system and took two employees over to Holland and Belgium to show them a similar system. The workers were asked what they thought of the system, and they made a number of recommendations.

When the equipment was sourced and a decision made as to which equipment to buy, the company considered the workers' concerns and suggestions

5.5 DESIGN OF SYSTEMS OF WORK

5.5.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in the Design of Systems of Work Through No Accident Behaviour (NAB) Teams

The No Accident Behaviour (NAB) process was introduced across a company in order to eliminate the unsafe action of people at work, and was designed to involve all employees in creating a "dynamic and sustainable safety culture". The two main objectives of the NAB teams are:

- 1) *'To further improve attitudes towards safety, bringing the Safety Culture to a world class level of safety excellence*
- 2) *'To empower the workforce and subcontractor groups to deliver a high level of personal safety performance'*

All site operatives are given a NAB Induction Talk as part of their site induction and NAB team meetings are an integral part of the whole NAB System. Any operator or subcontractor who has been working at the site for over one week is eligible for NAB team participation. These NAB teams discuss safe behaviours and safety problems and declare safe behaviours. Union safety representatives are involved in the NAB process.

At every operational site, between 30-50% of people on site must be on a NAB team. Employees either volunteer or are encouraged to join a NAB team, and there are between eight to twelve people in a team.

'Subcontractors are notoriously not interested in health and safety but they are told that if they come onto site they have to get involved in the NAB process' (Safety Manger)

The NAB team meeting involves taking employees away from their tasks for around 45 minutes once a week or fortnight. The teams meet to discuss their collective ownership of problems and issues and have become problem solving teams. Managers generally run the meetings, and have been trained to be good communicators, but employees are not specifically training for involvement in the NAB teams. The NAB team session is treated as an involvement session, and the processes of NAB are explained to team members. The basic aim of the NAB teams is to obtain a collective set of actions, where team members devise safe working practices and systems of work. Often an individual in a team takes personal responsibility for a particular action.

Team members talk to other employees and visitors about their safety and are involved in daily safety tours. Staff, contractors or visitors not wearing appropriate safety wear are prevented from entering sites by NAB members.

The NAB process is measured as part of the Safety Advisers Safety Inspections against a number of criteria. Some sites now have almost 100% of the workforce involved in health and safety through the NAB teams and the company are now aiming to move from a target of 30-50% membership to 100% in most sites.

'People are brought in good will, if they don't want to join they don't have to' (Safety Manager)

'Its hard to ignore 30-50% of your workforce being involved in safety' (Safety Manager)

Benefits of NAB teams Of the 70 reportable accidents in one year, only four of these involved employees who were members of the NAB teams. The NAB teams have resulted in raising awareness of health and safety amongst team members and have improved communication on site, with subcontractors having the opportunity to meet the permanent workforce on an individual basis.

5.6 PROBLEM SOLVING

5.6.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in Problem Solving

The introduction of the Manual Handling at Work Regulations 1992⁴ caused a company to undertake a fundamental review of the way in which its casks were stored, moved and handled. With the support of a local company several innovations were then implemented.

The majority of warehouses at this company were 'high rack' warehouses, with racks up to eight or ten casks high. Casks have been known to 'torpedo' (swing to an incorrect angle), and if this happens on the top rack the usual sling method of dealing with torpedoed casks does not work. When this happens the only way to turn the torpedoed cask is manually, which over the years has resulted in many injuries.

Some employees from a particular site were given the task of suggesting a solution to the torpedo problem. A line manager and warehouse operators thought of an idea that would be simple to use and easy to manoeuvre. The group came up with a prototype and approached a local engineering firm. This Cask Aider is a pneumatic jack type device, with four moveable legs, that uses the rack members on which the torpedoed cask sits. It is, therefore, ideally suited for the top tier, and a torpedoed cask can now be safely retrieved from any tier by only two people with minimum effort.

The Cask Aider is now commercially available in the industry. This device was a result of the initiative of the company employees and it won the Scottish Chamber of Safety Annual Safety Awards 1999.

5.6.2 An Example of Employee Involvement in Problem Solving

An employee suffered a lost time accident whilst attempting to remove a radiator fan for periodic maintenance which involved slinging the fan, lowering it to its edge and rolling it towards a forklift truck. As a result of this accident, which was partly due to the weight and awkwardness of the fans themselves, a team of employees was given the task of developing a method of removing the fans in a better, safer way.

⁴ Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. L23, HSE Books. ISBN 0717624153

The overall aim was to minimise the need to have a large number of employees manually manoeuvring the fans. The team devised a method of lowering the fan horizontally onto a trailer using a screwed rod. This method eliminated the need to roll the fan on its edge, and has proved very successful resulting in a significant reduction in the manual handling aspects of the job.

5.7 OPERATION OF RISK CONTROL SYSTEMS

5.7.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in Planning the Operation of Risk Control Systems

Work site transport was seen as a problem at a company plant, because there was no distinct pedestrianisation. A firm of outside consultants had been asked by management to tender for the work of reviewing the arrangements within the factory and making recommendations. Instead, an internal subcommittee of the Health and Safety Committee was formed to make recommendations. This subcommittee was a multi-functional team with a selection of people from the various business units, plant engineering people involved in project work and the Health and Safety Committee (who made sure that ideas fitted in with the future business plans).

This team identified various suggestions which resulted in a number of initiatives to reduce transport hazards across the factory, for example, pedestrian walkways and zones, dividing barriers, traffic cones. These changes saved the company approximately £20,000 in consultant fees.

6 MEASUREMENT

Measurement: performance is measured against agreed standards to reveal when and where improvement is needed (HSG65)

6.1 ACTIVE MONITORING

6.1.1 An Example of Employee Involvement in Conducting Site Safety Inspections

A joint venture of two companies set up safety task teams to try and improve health and safety. Each safety task team had ten employees and a team leader and members represented a cross-section of age, supervisory skills and engineering experience.

The safety task teams walked through all areas of their sites regularly to measure safety performance. For example, for access and egress, the teams checked that routes were properly signed and that openings were guarded. Other issues such as the correct stacking of materials, the timely disposal of waste and the wearing of protective clothing were reviewed.

The safety task teams produced guidelines for operatives and carried out fortnightly inspections of the work site, the results of which were publicised fortnightly to all employees. The safety task teams would meet before carrying out these inspections to discuss the issues arising from the previous inspection and meeting and discuss new health and safety issues identified by the workforce. These issues could then be looked at during the inspection, which often had a specific theme e.g. fire extinguishers. After the site visits had been completed, another meeting is held to discuss new issues and progress. If a significant problem was identified that was difficult to resolve, the Safety Department was asked to investigate.

During the inspections, team members inspected the site against the four- item checklist: housekeeping, access and egress, electrics and fire. Each aspect was scored out of five and then each marked for overall safety.

During an inspection, if, for example, the periodic maintenance on a piece of electrical equipment was overdue, the section manager/foreman would lose points against the checklist. The fortnightly inspection sheets were compared over time and against different sections, and the performance of the foremen/section managers were compared. Section Managers did not want to be identified as having the worst statistics, so the health and safety situation improved dramatically.

Once a fortnight, the twenty people on the safety task teams were given half a day to carry out these inspections. Project directors would intervene if a line manager tried to prevent a team member attending the meetings, thus demonstrating a commitment from the board of directors.

6.2 REACTIVE MONITORING: ACCIDENT/NEAR MISS INVESTIGATION

6.2.1 *An Example of Accident/Near Miss Investigations Through Case Study Tool Box Talks*

A company have introduced case study tool box talks as a means through which accidents and near miss incidents are discussed with the workforce. These case study tool box talks detail the facts and findings of any safety-related incidents. The operatives, engineers and supervisors of the whole company are required to consider the case study and analyse and suggest ways to prevent a similar incident. Managers note any good points that can be actioned and send a return back to the Safety Manager. As a result of such a case study tool box talk, the whole company's Code of Practice for Working on Customers' Electrical Equipment is being reviewed, rewritten and reissued.

'All this takes a significant amount of time and effort, however, the prime reason is to ensure everyone knows what is happening as best as possible.' (Safety Manager)

6.2.2 *An Example of Accident/Near Miss Investigations Through Problem Solving*

An employee suffered a lost time accident whilst attempting to remove a radiator fan for periodic maintenance, which involved slinging the fan, lowering it to its edge and rolling it towards a forklift truck. As a result of this accident, which was partly due to the weight and awkwardness of the fans themselves, a team of employees was given the task of developing a method of removing the fans in a better, safer way.

The overall aim was to minimise the need to have a large number of employees manually manoeuvring the fans. The team devised a method of lowering the fan horizontally onto a trailer using screwed rod. This method eliminated the need to roll the fan on its edge, and has proved very successful resulting in a significant reduction in the manual handling aspects of the job.

6.3 REACTIVE MONITORING: HAZARD SPOTTING

6.3.1 *An Example of Employee Involvement in Near Miss/Hazard Reporting*

All the safety representatives at this company are issued with a 'Report by Safety Representative' book, which allows them to make a written report of a working practice or condition which they consider to be unsatisfactory. The book also records accident investigation and recommendations. The union was involved in instructing the safety representatives in the use of the book. All employees are encouraged by the company to identify risks/hazards in the tasks they undertake and then either report uncontrollable risks to their supervisor for further action or to adopt procedures within the safety manual to overcome them.

The completed report is signed by the safety representative and the manager of the area depot and a copy is forwarded to the supervisor/manager and Safety Officer. The report is then discussed at the next safety meeting and a report of planned action is forwarded to all parties involved or investigated by the safety officer and other interested parties to improve the situation immediately. Targets are set for

managers to make improvements where reoccurrence or high incident rates are revealed.

Examples of reports made by safety representatives include:

- 1) A safety representative reported that the LPG containment area was located too close to an open drain. The toilets also backed onto this area and it would have been possible for someone to throw a cigarette butt through the window and for it to land in the drain or gas containment area with potentially devastating results. The LPG containment area was re-sited away from any drains and potentially flammable products.
- 2) A safety representative reported that when removing broken glass from a window, a piece fell from the top of the frame and cut the left forearm. He recommended that it should be made compulsory to wear chain link arm protection on arms. The safety committee agreed with the recommendation and introduced an even stronger arm protector.

6.3.2 An Example of Near Miss/Hazard Reporting Through the Safety Alert System.

The Safety Alert System at this company is a near miss and hazard reporting scheme whereby employees have made a significant contribution to health and safety, resulting in many improvements. All employees on site are actively involved in near miss reporting and investigation. The company have ensured that the prime purpose of the investigation is not to apportion blame, and, subsequently, the number of reports continue to rise year on year.

Any employee can report an incident to their Unit Manager and raise a safety alert. An investigation involving all concerned in the incident is then held. The Safety Advisor informed and confirms any remedial action to prevent a reoccurrence. Copies of the safety alert and any actions carried out are then sent to senior management. No safety alert is closed off until the health and safety advisor returns them to the Unit. A database means that managers can track progress, and through a review meeting, long term corrective actions are agreed. An examples of improvements resulting from safety alerts include:

New Products A number of safety alerts have been raised around new products which are introduced into the plant, and have identified issues about new models in pilot builds in the factory. Through these safety alerts the company can investigate particular areas before the production of a new model starts. Such safety alerts do not only identify issues with the model itself, but might also identify the need for additional equipment, or a problem with restricted floor space.

7. AUDIT & REVIEW

Audit/Review: a systematic review of performance based on data from monitoring and from independent audits of the whole health and safety management system (HSG-65)

7.1 AN EXAMPLE OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN AUDITING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY SYSTEMS

As part of the Safety Partnership between safety representatives and management at this company, safety representatives and operators are included in the audit team. The senior safety representative is involved in auditing the system along with middle management, with more safety representatives being trained in the near future. There are regular review meetings to discuss progress and a main safety committee meeting twice a year to discuss policy and objectives. During the review meetings the previous six months' objectives are discussed and objectives for the next six months set.

Appendix 1

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO REPORT

Balfour Beatty-AMEC Joint Venture: Jubilee Line Project

Bolton Hospitals NHS Trust

British Energy: Hinkley Point B Nuclear Power Station

Caledonian Paper plc

Corus Special Sections: Skinningrove

**Hazlewood Foods Ltd: Warrington
(Member of the Greencore Group)**

Housing & Property Care: Dudley

Leyland Trucks Ltd

Morrison plc

SEC Ltd

Erco Denholn Ltd

United Distillers and Vintners

Appendix 2

Press Release E137:99 - 14 July 1999

HSE on the look out for examples of good practice of employee involvement in health and safety

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is on the look out for examples of good practice in organisations large and small that can demonstrate active employee involvement in health and safety. The information is wanted to provide case study material for a future HSE publication on the subject.

Norman Byrom, from HSE's Operation's Unit, which is leading the search, explained exactly what HSE is looking for:

"We are interested in examples of effective employee involvement in health and safety from all employment sectors, including small and medium size enterprises and are particularly keen to learn of experience in organisations which do not have all their employees 'under one roof'. For example, contracting organisations, agencies or organisations employing peripatetic workers.

"We would also like to hear from organisations which have contractor or agency staff on their premises and have actively involved them in health and safety."

If, as an employer, manager, safety representative, safety professional, or employee, you feel you might have something to offer, please contact:
Norman Byrom, HSE Operations Unit, Daniel House, Trinity Road, Bootle, Merseyside L20 7RH. Tel: 0151 951 4336. Or E-mail:
Norman.Byrom@hse.gov.uk, by the end of September 1999.

NOTE TO EDITORS

It may not be possible to include all examples received by HSE in the publication. Permission will be sought from any company before they become involved.

PUBLIC ENQUIRIES:

Call HSE's InfoLine, tel: 0541-545500

or write to: HSE Information Centre, Broad Lane, Sheffield S3 7HQ.