



Saving Lives through Safe Operations

Safety nowadays is just as relevant in the oil and gas industry as it was 10 years ago. And, while the industry continues to make great strides to reduce the amount of job-related injuries, the reality is the same safety policies and procedures that have been in place for years are simply not enough to prevent fatalities. Based on our depth of experience working with oil and gas executives, a common disconnect between safety and operations is often responsible for a hazardous work environment.

Safety alone is not sufficient

The standard approach to safety is to develop policies and procedures that protect workers from harm. Occasional training might include best practices and methods that are most effective in preventing accidents. Audits are another common element of safety programs in refineries. They are designed to enforce safety protocols, including placement of warning signs, wearing proper PPE and fire equipment maintenance. All of these things are nothing new to the industry and serve a valuable purpose. However, relying on safety alone without integrating it into daily operations can produce incredibly deceptive results. What we mean by this is, people become complacent with safety methods when the frequency of non-fatal injuries is low. It gives them a false sense of security that working conditions are safe, when in fact, they are not. It is for this reason that oil and gas fatalities are on the rise.

Fatalities on the rise

The fatality rate among oil and gas workers is now nearly eight times higher than the all-industry rate of 3.2 deaths for every 100,000 workers.¹ The mass exodus of baby boomers into retirement has caused a new influx of workers, which many industry experts believe do not have the training or experience to apply safe practices on the job. Harsh weather and long hours also contribute to the dangerous nature of these occupations. All the more reason to integrate safety into every aspect of operations in the beginning stages of a person's career.

Root cause

As mentioned earlier, not linking safety with operations can be a recipe for dangerous working conditions. In many cases, this type of mindset is so deeply embedded into the company culture that people begin to accept the possibility of an occasional injury, or even death, in the workplace. This rationale leads to risky behavior, which is the root cause for many accidents we typically see. For example, a three-year analysis of accidents for a major client of ours revealed 79% were caused by misaligned behaviors and/or skill deficiencies.

"Proudfoot also assisted in the development and delivery of a comprehensive initiative to improve safety at work across our operations, which included training sessions for all our employees and the installation of a near-hit reporting system. Safety was at the heart of their project work."

– Managing Director

¹ <http://www.npr.org/2013/12/27/250807226/on-the-job-deaths-spiking-as-oil-drilling-quickly-expands>