

Safety – Soft and Hard options 101

Safety is the 'buzzword' in workplace management. Careers and departments have been created to service this necessary requirement of Industry. Training and paperwork systems abound, but how effective are they in real terms to the operators out in the field? We hear terms like 'industry best practice', but where is the proven evidence?

Basic level training courses soon lose the respect of experienced personnel and tend to trivialise safety rather than enhancing it. Compulsory twelve monthly re-training compounds the effect even more, unless a higher level of operator education and involvement can be achieved.

To be effective, safety must be respected and understood by both management and workers. Experience and practical interpretations must be injected into the process.

Encouraging personnel to think and be a part of a given operation is the first step to achieving safety in practical terms, however suggestions from 'stake holders' are often ignored due to a combination of political expediency and budget restraints.

Soft options are training and documented systems. Once the paper trail has been signed off, everyone is happy and supposedly safe.

Hard options are re-designing and building practical systems that remove or reduce danger zones encountered by personnel 'at the sharp end'. This requires a lot more effort, planning and financial commitment, but if done correctly will make a significant improvement to everyone involved a workplace situation.

If the outcomes have proven to be effective, they can THEN be classified as 'industry best practice'!