

## Safe Work Month October 2017 – Sharing knowledge and experience, benefits everyone.

By Jaye Small, Safety/Training Advisor

This year's theme for National Safe Work Month is "sharing safety knowledge and experience, benefits everyone" Sharing your knowledge and experience is imperative in managing safety and risk. It encourages transparency, discussion, and involvement, which in turn encourages an overall proactive approach to safety within the workplace.

# NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH 2017

Let's reflect for a moment and consider the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster which killed 167 people in the UK - Piper Alpha was, and still is, discussed and shared throughout the world. Piper Alpha is considered the worst offshore oil disaster in the history of the UK; it was attributed mainly to human error and, was a major eye opener to the offshore industry and its safety issues. After the tragedy, a major investigation took place which led to a lengthy report in which 106 recommendations were given for changes to the North Sea safety procedures. These findings ultimately resulted in the Offshore Installations (Safety Case) Regulations 1992 being implemented.



### In Brief - A safety case is a document produced by the operator of a facility which:

- Identifies the hazards and risks
- Describes how the risks are controlled
- Describes the safety management system in place to ensure the controls are effectively and consistently applied

You may be wondering why I'm talking about the Piper Alpha disaster? I feel confident in saying that hundreds, if not thousands of companies, offshore or onshore and throughout the world have

benefited from at least one of the findings that came out of the investigation. Why? Because the safety information was **shared** and people learnt from the **experience** of the catastrophic tragedy of Piper Alpha, therefore finding better ways of going about business.

Has your workplace had an incident that resulted in a subsequent investigation? Were the findings, causal factors and recommendations then **shared** within the workplace allowing everyone to learn from the **experience**? I sincerely hope you answered yes to that question, if not, why not? Taking a positive approach to sharing information is key to establishing a positive Safety Culture in your workplace.

### What type of safety culture does your workplace have? Negative or positive?

#### Examples of a positive safety culture within your workplace:

- The safety system is informed by the workforce, not designed and enforced only by management
- Communication occurs openly between members of the workforce and management – transparency
- Communication and sharing of knowledge is encouraged

**Examples of a negative culture in your workplace:**

- The safety system is enforced only by management, and the workers are not involved in implementing new safety initiatives
- Lack of communication – a friend of mine recently resigned from a workplace because no one spoke to each other, nobody consulted each other about anything, and she was left in a new position having no idea what was required of her. Clearly we're at work to do a job, but I believe it's important to have interaction/consultation with your co-workers
- A blame culture – I'm sure some of you have worked in an environment, or know someone who has, where you are blamed for an incident or accident, instead of looking at why it occurred in the first place.
- A "do as I say" attitude



**Here are some ideas on how your workplace may encourage safety sharing and participate in Safe Work Month**

- Set up a safety display - consider using posters to promote safety in your workplace.
- Show safety in action
- Get a small group together and check for hazards in your workplace.
- Conduct an emergency evacuation drill – this gets everyone to be involved and provides an excellent opportunity to discuss what worked and what didn't through the **combined experience** of the team
- Do some housekeeping to tidy work areas
- Invite a specialist to hold a training or information session
- Arrange basic first aid training
- Hold a toolbox talk with your work team – this may prove to be one best way to **share safety knowledge and experiences**.

**Some sobering statistics from Work Safe Australia:** Below is a list of industries and the average fatality rate per year over the last 5 years.

- Accommodation Industry: 3 workers killed each year
- Construction Industry: 31 workers killed each year
- Manufacturing Industry: 14 workers killed each year
- Public Administration and Safety Industry: 8 workers killed each year
- Road Transport Industry: 42 workers killed each year
- Agriculture Industry: 40 workers killed each year

That's a total of 138 (averaged over 5 years) people killed at work, on average, every year in Australia. In other words 3 people a week, or every 2.64 days someone in Australia is killed at work!



Last year there were 40 more people than the average that died in Australian workplaces (see below):

- Total Deaths at work in Australia in 2016 = 178
- Deaths at work January 2016-28th August 2016 = 113
- Deaths at work January 2017 –28th August 2017 = 115

We need to be vigilant, speak up in our workplace if things aren't being conducted safely, is there a better way to do something? We are governed by the law of "duty of care" this in a nutshell means looking after yourself and your mates at work.

For more information and a breakdown of the statistics please visit:  
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/national-safe-work-month/about>

*ISPL would like to offer our sincere condolences to anyone reading this blog who has lost a loved one, a friend, or a colleague in a workplace accident.*

Integrate Sustainability offer a range of services, including training, system management, and gap analysis to assist you with your safety needs. If you would like to find out more please call (08) 9468 0338 or email [enquires@integratesustainability.com.au](mailto:enquires@integratesustainability.com.au).