



HUNTSMAN

a BST case study



HUNTSMAN TERNATE ITALY

Communicating Safety with a SMAIL

Situation

Huntsman's chemical plant in Ternate, Italy, established in 1965, has seen a steady improvement in safety performance. While safety has always been a high priority, incident investigations and analysis showed that the site would benefit from stronger engagement of the site's employees. At a certain point, site safety leaders became aware that they needed a vehicle which was capable of raising attention to risks and that would also represent the innovative character of their safety process.

Solutions

Huntsman Ternate called in BST for help in establishing a customised, employee-driven safety initiative using BAPP® technology. A steering group was nominated and training began. Early on, the process encountered resistance. Workers were skeptical that their peers, not safety experts, could offer them effective safety advice. The professional approach and enthusiasm of the observers, however, did much to allay these doubts and helped motivate many workers to get involved in the process. Constant communication about the underlying principles of the process, both to workgroups in safety meetings and to individuals at the beginning of each safety observation, helped convince workers that the methodology could be effective.

Focus on Communication

In 2003, with the process well underway, the steering group saw the need to focus more specifically on communicating their activities, data, and results to the workforce and management. EHS and Total Quality Manager Maria Vittoria Franco says, "We

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At a Glance:

- Huntsman has over 75 operations in 24 countries
- The Huntsman Polyurethanes Ternate system house is located about 45km (28 miles) from Milan, Italy
- The site serves clients in Italy, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, and produces 40,000 tons per annum of rigid and flexible insulating polyurethanes
- Improved percent safe metrics (a measure of safe work) to 93%



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consider the behaviour-based process a process of prevention for safety, and we wanted to show that collaboration is its winning element. But collaboration can only be obtained through dialogue, and so communication became the essential element.”

The process, named SMAIL (Sistema di Monitoraggio Azioni Insicure sul Lavoro) which is pronounced in Italian just as “smile” is in English, has a talent for finding creative ways to communicate safety. Steering group members posted SMAIL reader-boards in all departments, showing the conglomerated results of safety observations and action-item status. They posted small SMAIL signs as well throughout the factory in locations where at-risk behaviours were observed. Perhaps the site’s innovative spirit for communicating safety is best exemplified by the production of a safety video. The steering group produced the film based on the observations made by the group over the years. The actors were employees recruited for the film. The film was instrumental in winning over employees to the process as a whole and in demonstrating the progress that SMAIL had made in achieving the broad and consistent engagement in risk reduction that the site was looking for.

To help sustain the process, Huntsman Ternate again invited BST to provide EH&S leadership workshops for all site managers. The SMAIL process had a part in organising “Managing Injury Reduction” training for managers and supervisors as well as the site’s other employees. Management support, from the highest level to front-line supervisors, has been critical for the process—allotting funds for site improvements and freeing up time for employee involvement in safety activities. Management has seen to it that different workers cycle through the steering team. In five years, the process has made over 20,000 observations. Management communicated clearly their support in this way and made possible the gathering of exposure data through observations.

Results

Over a five year period, the site has raised their percent-safe metrics, a measure of the use of safe work practices, from 85% to 93.6%. They’ve had only one recordable injury in the last four years. In 2006, the Ternate site won the Huntsman President Award for Responsible Care for employee involvement. The process takes credit for attaining improvements in housekeeping, use of PPE, chemical labeling, and contractor integration, all of which have a direct impact on safety. In addition, process observations have positively affected technical improvements, e.g., chemical leakage containment for storage drums, a new floor with better draining in the plant, a modernized unloading bay, and an automated palletizing system with built in worker protection features.

Site Director Mariangela Casartelli sees the process as a crucial means for communicating safety. Says Casartelli, “SMAIL offered us the chance to talk about safety in an unusual manner, thus being more attractive and effective. Our employees . . . were witnesses of actions that can be part of everyone’s daily life. More than any other kind of safety message, they promoted awareness around behavioural risks.”

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