



## **John Peoples: Health and Safety Manager, Wilton site - Huntsman Polyurethane**

BEHAVIOURAL SAFETY USER CONFERENCE 2003

Just to introduce myself, my name is John Peoples. I am the Health and Safety manager at the Wilton site at Teeside. I'm also the European Behavioural safety champion for polyurethane. I've been in this role for 5 years. My past was that I was a plant manager at a chemical site, and I moved to the North East to take up my role in behavioural safety. My passion for behavioural safety came when I went to Loughborough university to gain a post graduate diploma, talking to people like Mr Cox and Louis Vaseel, and people like that - an excellent education.

Just to show you what our plant looks like, we have a short video clip. (Shows video of shots of Wilton site).

The plants that we work in are divided into 2 sections. The benzene plant is our newest acquisition, and that is 6 years old. The aniline plant is more like 40 years old. The production of aniline means working with hundreds of tonnes of chemicals, from flammables, to caustic, to very toxic. So we have a load of problems to deal with.

The operation has been run very successfully for a number of years. We had an excellent safety record. We were getting up to 14 years without a record able injury. Everything was going well.

There have been a number of changes in a short space of time. We were taken over, we were an I.C.I. company, we are now Huntsman, and the organisation has changed significantly, and people have adopted this behavioural program that we are going to deal with.

Believe it or not, though I have talked about toxics, this is what you end up with. We export it to our sister plant in Europe, and it really reaches into our everyday life. Refrigeration, footwear, automotive, it's a very versatile product. I feel very proud in working for this company that has a responsible approach in its use for the chemical.

Defences are in place, but the tide will eventually wash these away.

We were doing really in our operations. There were no big issues, people were being trained and we were getting material out the door, nothing significant. But when you looked around, the environment didn't lend itself to 'this is a good operation'. Housekeeping really does make a difference. We have all seen it where somebody is coming to visit your plant and there is a mad rush to tidy things up and make it presentable for that period of time. I'm sure they know that when they arrive though. We had big issues, and we have done a lot in regard to that. The company has invested £750,000 in the last three years just for housekeeping on the old plant - so a big investment.

If your not constantly being defensive, not looking ahead, what happens is 'the tide always comes in, and you can't fight that'. You can have little defences like we had, but your sandcastles will go. What bought it home was when our good run of performance came to an end when one of our operators was injured 3 years ago. He had come into contact with a caustic material. That meant he was off work for a period of time.

When we looked into this, what really disappointed me was this incident had occurred on numerous occasions, but there was nobody in the line of fire so it didn't really matter until the time it did get someone. So that made me think, "What is our culture, what is our attitude?" and recognising the changes people had been going through. There were another 20 people who came over from the North West the same time I did, and there was a different culture of North West against North East, and we thought we were doing well.

So what was I going to do? Was the accident going to force me to do something? It wasn't just that. There was also regulatory bodies, they would come in, see what your doing, and want to see continuous improvements. You have safety committees. You have your community,

especially in the North East where we have a lot of involvement with the community. Associates and contractors as they go around they see what your other areas are doing.

Where I come from in Fleetwood we are called ‘codheads’, so I thought we would start off with this fish bone approach. Previous to this we had already involved the entire workforce in ‘cultural surveys’. These were asking ‘how you carry out measures?’ We have actually carried out 2 in a period of 3 years. They are useful and generated a lot of information, but for my sins I did nothing with them. I showed them to everybody, said ‘this is what you say’, but then put them away somewhere, put them on a list to do. But they were not top priority. It was a big mistake, spending all that time getting people involved and then doing nothing with it. It really switches everyone off after you have convinced them to take part.

There were other avenues we explored. Internal and external audits, what were they saying about us? Also talking to the regulatory bodies, the H.S.E and the E.A. because the sites are registered as top tier sites and we have to conform to a lot of regulations to manage that.

So why did we do this? (the “fishbone” technique) This came about because we needed to collate the information. The first part was looking at the assets. What do we need to do to make sure the assets are being run? Procedures are in there. Modifications and process hazard review. That was interesting because we had good procedures and excellent documentation about modification, but did we close them out? No we didn’t. That opened a can of worms and took a number of people a long time to get on the backlog, because we are talking about hundreds that needed to be formally closed down.

The next element we looked at was our leadership. In a brainstorming exercise we looked at where we wanted to be, accountability, the contractual issues. It was a good exercise.

The next thing we looked at was the procedures. An interesting one for me is the aftermath - the crisis management. We had systems put in for a crisis, but what do you do in the aftermath? We did a lot of work on that, and now have a crisis management team, who don’t deal with the incident, but the aftermath.

And lastly, the bit we are all here for, the behavioural element. Where did we want to be? We put down a number of areas... near miss reporting ... beliefs and values. You need to get people involved, involved in creating their own distinctive beliefs and values for their own unique areas. We took everyone away for one day and asked them what they expected from people, whether it was ownership, the way they behaved. They set their own values. These sessions produce a load of pictorial diagrams that we have put up throughout the areas to remind them what we mean by ownership, with information with them. This has been bought into throughout the organisation, right from the top to the bottom.

That was the process I went through. Now I have done this, how am I going to manage it? This is a safety committee. For my first three years I absolutely hated going to these monthly meetings. It was such a chore. All we did was look at what had gone on the previous month. We never looked ahead or discussed any real issues. But I thought enough is enough. I had already been through this process, and I wanted to share what I had learnt. So on one of the safety behavioural days that is something we had been running for the previous 5 years, I bought up the fishbone technique, and said we need to move on, and the safety groups are not working. I wasn’t through the lack of trying, we tried getting the shop floor, the shop steward, another manager, we tried them all running the safety committee’s and they didn’t work. We even got the H.S.E in to say what a wonderful thing the safety committee was. It just kept falling down. People talk about incentives; we were really clever in that. We said every month one person from each committee would attend a meeting, and if they didn’t at the end of the year they would be penalised financially. So they did all turn up, but they sat there with their arms folded wanting nothing to do with it.

So where did we move? I asked the groups after showing them the fishbone was ‘how would we move on with this?’ We decided to break everything down into small teams and asked for volunteers for to work on of these teams. I am going to briefly take you through a number of these.

The safety team remit was to improve the SUSA (safe/unsafe acts auditing) system and develop and implement a near miss reporting system. The way we manage the SUSA is a bit of a hybrid process. The SUSA form was developed by the team. They produce it with some checks that you put in place. The important part for ourselves is the feedback, the actions are not just condemned to the abyss, they are captured with the action tracking.

The near miss reporting system is along the same lines. They produced it, they monitor it and they audit it.

The contractor review group. The remit was to 'develop relationships between ourselves and the contractors'. Historically we have had a hard time with our contractors. In 1996 we were looking at 28 out of 100,000 hours worked. We are now down to less than 2. We do heavily integrate the contractors into everything we do, all our working practices.

The health group. The remit was to 'implement an improved structure for health issues within the area for our associates and contractors'. This has been great really.

### **Lessons we have learnt**

Define a clear implementation strategy. That goes back to the work we did with the fishbone.

Exploit a variety of communication media. You cannot have enough communication. It needs to be varied and you need to target your audience.

Generate ownership and enthusiasm through in-house development. It really worked for us.

Decide which aspects have the highest potential for change. Do go for quick wins. I made sure all the different groups did have some quick wins so that they were encouraged.

Encourage associates by coaching not criticising. Saying '&yes', not 'yes but...'

Involve the shop stewards and safety reps from the beginning.

### **What we are doing differently?**

Individual decide how to operate and run the safety groups

Total workforce participation in developing values and behaviours

We are involving people from all levels of the organisation with different skills and backgrounds.

Expecting accountability but not seeking to blame. This is key.

Details may not transfer but the principles will be the same.

*NB (Because this was one of the finalists in the pm – time was short and there was no time for questions)*