



Communication Issues

- Distractions
- Adverse environment – noise, poor weather (discourages use of outdoor intercoms)
- Lack of assertiveness – sender and receiver must have the confidence to clarify that information is correctly passed between them
- Absence of sanctions for blatant disregard of procedure/clear ‘payoffs’ for bending or breaking the rules

Additional Good Practices in Communications

- Involve those who need to send or receive communications in:
 - Establishing the required form and content of those communications
 - The means of communication
 - Selection and testing of communications hardware
- Risk assess communications
 - Develop an inventory of critical communications interfaces - identify which crew members or crews need to communicate with each other
 - Rank these communications in terms of how critical they are to the safety of the crew – think of the outcomes if these communications fail
 - Focus on the most safety critical communications to eliminate possible problems – see Table 1 – as far as practicable (Centre for Chemical Process Safety 2004)

SHIFT HANDOVERS

Supervisors and operators poorly communicated critical information regarding the start-up during the shift turnover; BP did not have a shift turnover communication requirement for its operations staff (CCPS Report on the Texas City Accident - 2004.)

When responsibility for ongoing work is passed from one workgroup to another, it is essential that safety critical information provided to the oncoming team is clear and accurate and can be transferred rapidly and efficiently. Outgoing teams will be keen to conduct the handover process quickly and go home: oncoming teams are often similarly keen to speed up the process so they can get to work so the process is generally rushed.

HSE’s report (2006) suggests the following good practices in relation to shift handovers:

- Always allow adequate time for shift turnovers to occur and eliminate all distractions and time pressure at this time
- Conduct all handovers face to face to allow dialogue between oncoming and outgoing crews
- Arrange work such that no tasks that are risk significant – for example critical maintenance tasks or difficult maneuvers – are not carried over from one shift to another but are completed by one crew in a single shift. (This is often not achievable in reality)
- Match the time taken for the handover to the risk level of the operations being handed over
- Set clear company standards and guidance for handovers setting out the key information to be exchanged – for example current work and resources available
- Make sure that all appropriate documents are available for the handover – logs, permits to work and including anything that must be displayed on computer screens
- Take care that the language used on logs and the standard of handwriting is clear and intelligible