

Refining Safety Performance:

THE CASE OF SC OMV PETROM SA

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Gratiela Sandu, Health, Safety, Environment and Quality (HSEQ) Manager



The processing and refining of crude oil is a highly technical mechanical operation that involves volatile and corrosive substances in often extreme conditions. While refinery workers understand the importance of safety, they tend to concentrate on unsafe conditions rather than unsafe acts. Unfortunately, this can translate into a high number of accidents and injuries. To avoid falling into such a trap, SC OMV Petrom SA implemented a comprehensive awareness-building programme that incorporated all levels of the company. By increasing awareness and commitment, the company was able to drastically reduce operational risk by cultivating a sustainable safety culture.

Petrom Group is the largest oil and gas group in South-eastern Europe, with activities in the business segments of Exploration and Production, Refining and Marketing as well as Gas and Power. The Group operates two refineries, Petrobrazi and Arpechim, and has a maximum annual refining capacity of 8 mn tons.

Though the company had long considered safety to be high priority, when Neil Morgan was appointed the Manager of the Refining Division, he renewed the unit's commitment to achieving zero accidents. To this end, in 2008, Mr. Morgan decided to partner with DuPont to assess perception of safety among all employees within the Refining Division. "Through this assessment, it was determined that people did not consider themselves as the owners of safety," said Gratiela Sandu, Health, Safety, Environment and Quality (HSEQ) Manager. For this reason, the company decided to implement the safety awareness-building programme with the support of DuPont Sustainable Solutions.

In defining the project, the leadership team determined that it was essential to create a sense of personal commitment to safety among its employees. While the concept that all injuries can be prevented is part of the OMV Petrom corporate ethos, it was not widely embraced by the workforce in the refineries. To get employees to commit to this corporate core value, the leadership team decided to create a truly integrated safety management system that involves employees at all levels of the organization – senior leaders and operational staff, contractors and permanent employees. Key to this system was a visible, transparent leadership structure.



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Prior to the launch of the safety awareness programme, most of the knowledge and implementation capacity for safety issues was concentrated within the context of the HSEQ department. Though employees were involved in the process of developing safety standards, “many felt as though these standards came from ‘outside’” according to Ms. Sandu. To dispel such perceptions, a new structure was developed by Ms. Sandu and her team in concert with DuPont specialists. A cascading architecture was developed in which a corporate Central Safety Committee (CSC) assumed responsibility for driving safety objectives. In order to translate these objectives into action, a CSC was created for each site, as were subject-related task teams. The latter were charged with specific goals related to a particular process, such as standards and procedures, the safety audit system or the work permit system. Each body actively communicated the minutes, topics and outcomes of each meeting to heighten visibility among employees, and to provide input to the corporate CSC.

Despite the great progress achieved using the new management structure, the leadership team sought more opportunities to engage each of their employees. In order to develop a sense of ownership for safety among more employees, a network of internal trainers was created. Approximately thirty top employees from varied functional groups were chosen to be internal trainers, each receiving extensive training on safety practices. This “Train-the-Trainer” programme involved a significant



amount of coaching, thus cultivating the skills required to deliver safety trainings to all operational staff on an on-going basis. Indeed, over 2,500 employees have been trained by these internal trainers to date. Moreover, they have become integral in the process of developing and delivering new training materials. Due to the success of the “Train-the-Trainer” programme, as well as the high importance of the internal trainer role, a process has been established by the corporation to select, qualify, engage and reward internal trainers, thus ensuring retention.

Though OMV Petrom leaders could have been satisfied with the results of these activities, they wanted to reach all employees that worked on the sites, including contractors. To target these workers, a specific task team was created on each site. The task team developed an approach heavily influenced by the DuPont 6-Step Approach for Contractor Safety Management – a methodology for selecting, training and managing contractors that optimizes safety outcomes. This approach delivered high-caliber contractors that were committed to performing work safely. To further reinforce the commitment to zero accidents and injuries, the contractor safety task team delivered six safety seminars to contractor teams. Improvement suggestions were collected at each seminar, and were used to inform the future contractor safety management strategy.

REFINING SAFETY PERFORMANCE

To supplement these activities, OMV Petrom adopted a comprehensive communication campaign to maximize visibility. Letters were sent regularly by senior management to maintain motivation. Poster campaigns and frequent question and answer sessions further reinforced the commitment to safety in the workplace. Additionally, a reward system was created – “contests were held: if people gave the correct answer, they would get a prize, such as cameras, t-shirts or radios,” said Ms. Sandu. “Also, if people were seen working safely during audits, they would be rewarded.”

These initiatives proved successful: “employees started to understand that they can make a difference. This was the most important achievement - we reached the workers. They truly feel involved” said Ms. Sandu. Progress is reflected in the significant decrease in lost work days – from 176 in 2007 to 4 in 2010. A similar sentiment was also expressed by Peter Augsten, DuPont Regional Leader for Employee Safety and member of the OMV Petrom project delivery team: “the approach taken by the leadership opened the hearts and minds of the staff. This started at the top, and fostered trust in not only the capabilities of the management teams, but also of each individual to ensure safe performance.”

Esat Birgen, DuPont Project Manager, analyzes the primary reasons for OMV Petrom’s success: “the project thrived under



the visionary leadership of senior executives as well as the dedicated and tireless work of project teams.” Mr. Augsten added, “rather than being prescriptive, the approach and solutions developed by OMV Petrom were adapted to local and cultural specificities. This was a pivotal success factor.”

Due to the success and sustainability of the programme, corporate management currently envisions the establishment of similar programmes in other OMV Petrom business units. Furthermore, the standards developed will be adopted across the whole of the company.



In 2010, OMV Petrom was recognized for its achievements in safety by being awarded the prestigious DuPont Safety Award for sustainable business impact. “The annual DuPont Safety Awards reward the most significant projects, programmes and contributions in workplace safety or safety in the greater society,” explained Koen van Neyghem, President, DuPont Sustainable Solutions EMEA. “We are very pleased to recognize OMV Petrom for its achievements and commitment to safety excellence and the welfare of its employees.”

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