
Employee Involvement in Environmental Activities

Summary

EIGA Working Group 5, Environment, has produced this newsletter to share with EIGA members the learning and best practices highlighted for increased employee involvement in environmental activities and aspects.

Introduction

Keeping employees and contractors motivated and involved with environmental activities has significant benefits. Engaged employees generate ideas, are motivated to work to procedures and standards, and suggest practical modifications to work practices that can minimise environmental impact and improve business processes by using less resources.

Other benefits include increased vigilance to hazardous situations and near miss reporting. Noticing and reporting near misses is particularly beneficial as it represents opportunities for corrective action without the incident happening and can even prevent other such future incidents.

Involvement in environmental activities by people helps reduce the risk of environmental impact that could pollute the environment, gives people the understanding and awareness to use resources efficiently and helps people to be able to know how they can comply with environmental regulations.

Spills of oils and chemicals are known issues that have the potential to pollute soils, groundwater and water courses. If people are aware that they can intervene to reduce the impact of spills into the environment and understand the importance of good environmental housekeeping, for example, storing oils and chemicals in protected areas and away from drains and water courses, then this reduces the chance of incidents.

How to get employees more informed and involved?

Many organisations have internet and intranet systems and company newsletters where Environmental Bulletins are published to highlight changes in procedures and actions to be taken following incidents or near misses.

A good practice is to use Environmental Health and Safety committees on site locations to generate, review and implement ideas. Such a tactic is very good for creating better ownership of the issues and the actions as they have been developed locally.

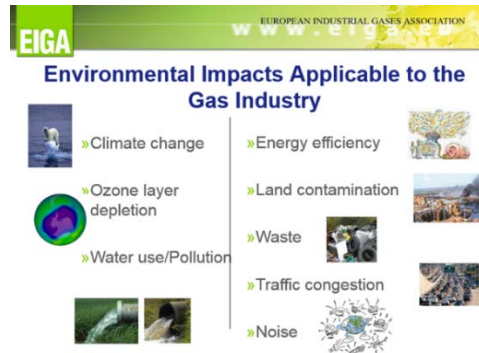
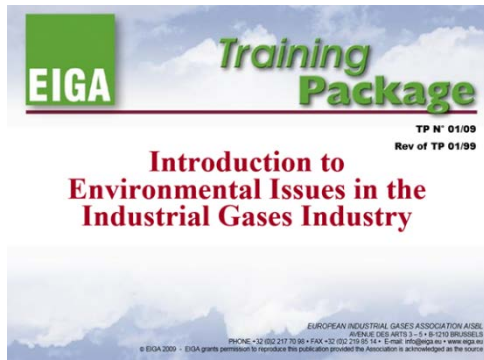
Understanding the consequences of environmental issues can sometimes be more difficult to explain and engage people in a practical way than say for safety incidents where we are preventing people from getting injured. Changes and improvements are much easier to explain for safety incidents.

Understanding and awareness of the consequences of an environmental incident is also critical otherwise employees will not understand why these issues are important to their day to day work.

For example, oil spilled in a containment area, on concrete on soil or into water all have different environmental consequences.

Training can be delivered on line or face to face. Classroom training is generally more effective for assessing competence, but on-line training can be delivered faster to a larger population.

- EIGA examples of training packages



Some organisations have reward and recognition systems such as company awards. EIGA has Environmental awards to recognise achievements and encourage the spread of good practices

Communications need to be made easy to access, relevant and attractive so that people clearly understand the messages, but are also to be motivated to act.

One EIGA member company's cylinder operations site established an employee involvement team that implemented a continuous environmental improvement plan. This was done through posters, newsletters and a reward system for the people on site to identify and fix environmental issues as well as an overall action plan for the site. The work on site also reduced electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emission. They achieved this by:

- Securing employee involvement and empowerment at the operator level;
- Establishing an environmental support group;
- Empowering the support group to own and drive the environmental agenda on site, on behalf of their colleagues, within a defined scope;
- Each support group member was in turn the environmental champion in their department;
- Managers at all levels needed to evolve into leaders, with consistent sponsorship, encouragement, recognition and passion;
- These activities and successes were also shared internally and externally;
- Participating in external activities such as World Environment Day (5th June annually) or other local activities can be valuable to highlight and learn about environmental issues as can organising events to support environmental organisations;
- Monitoring, measurement, recognition and feedback of successes is key to maintaining the motivation of employees;
- Performing tasks safely / environmental observations and correcting any issues also provides a tool for getting employees and contractors more involved in identifying environmental hazards and correcting them.

Themes and topics

A good suggestion is to have themed topics such as, energy and water saving, reducing leaks and spills and waste reduction and increasing reuse and recycling.

What materials are effective?

Communication material must take into account the organisations culture and also a range of communications styles as well as, ideally, to be in the recipient's native language e.g. what will work for office employees may not be suitable for operators, drivers or marketing employees. Most important issue is to make sure to keep the materials up to date.

Examples include

- Posters;
- Intranet;
- company and EIGA Bulletins;
- regular communication and feedback at meetings;
- EIGA Newsletters.

Actions

The EIGA member companies should continue to encourage their employees, site teams to initiate environmental improvement projects since they have the potential to benefit the business, the environment and also promote the good environmental stewardship of member companies in the communities where they operate.

Comments

EIGA members welcome any feedback on this and other publications. If you need any more information, or if you would like to make any comments contact the EIGA office.

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