



REFINING SAFETY PERFORMANCE

SC OMV PETROM SA shows how it is done at its Petrobrazî refinery

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 refining division. 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. Its refinery in Petrobrazî is one of the largest in Romania and one of the largest in Eastern Europe. It employs around 700 people and has a maximum annual refining capacity of 4.2m tons.

“ In 2008, OMV Petrom decided to partner with DuPont Sustainable Solutions to assess safety performance among all employees within the Refining Division. “Through this assessment, it was determined that people did not consider themselves as the owners of safety.”
Anca Tudor, Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Manager

MAKING EMPLOYEES THE OWNERS OF SAFETY

Though the company had long considered safety to be a high priority, the refinery renewed its commitment to zero accidents when Neil Morgan was appointed manager of the Refining Division in 2008. That same year, he decided to partner with DuPont to assess safety performance among all employees within the refining division.

Anca Tudor, Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Manager at the Petrobrazî Refinery says: “The assessment showed that people did not consider themselves as the owners of safety.” So the company decided to implement a safety awareness-building programme with the support of DuPont Sustainable Solutions.

In defining the project, the leadership team realised 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 refinery. To get employees to commit to this corporate core value, the leadership team set about creating a truly integrated safety management system that involves employees at all levels of the organisation – senior leaders and operational staff, contractors and permanent employees. Key to this system was a visible, transparent leadership structure.

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PUTTING IN PLACE A SAFETY STRUCTURE

Prior to the launch of the safety awareness programme, most of the knowledge and implementation capacity for safety issues was concentrated within the HSSE department. Though employees were involved in the process of developing safety standards, according to Ms Tudor, “many felt as though these standards came from ‘outside’”. To dispel such perceptions, a new structure was developed together with DuPont specialists: a cascading architecture in which a corporate Central Safety Committee (CSC) assumed responsibility for driving safety objectives. In order to translate these objectives into action, the Petrobrazi site not only set up a CSC, but also 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.

PASSING ON NEW SKILLS

Despite the great progress achieved using the new management structure, the leadership team sought more opportunities to engage each employee. 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. DuPont conducted initial train-the-trainer sessions, developed training material for OMV Petrom and coached internal trainers in their first sessions.



“Employees started to understand that they can make a difference. This was the most important achievement - we reached the workers. They now feel truly involved.” **Anca Tudor, Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Manager**

This support put in place 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. And the internal trainers 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.

To supplement these activities, OMV Petrom adopted a comprehensive communication campaign to maximise 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 and if someone gave the correct answer, they would receive a prize, such as cameras, t-shirts or radios,” Ms Tudor explains. “Also, if people were seen working safely during audits, they would be rewarded.”

These initiatives proved successful. “Employees started to understand that they could make a difference. This was the most important achievement - we reached the workers. They now truly feel involved,” says Ms Tudor.

As Romica Secuiu, foreman of the CR unit explains: “I have been working at Petrobrazi for 20 years. In the past, we thought safety was something our safety department and line managers were responsible for. They set the rules. We followed them, but thinking about safety was not really our job. Things have really changed since 2008. Now, we get involved in finding the best ways of staying safe when carrying out certain tasks. That has made a huge difference.”

EXTENDING SAFETY TO CONTRACTORS

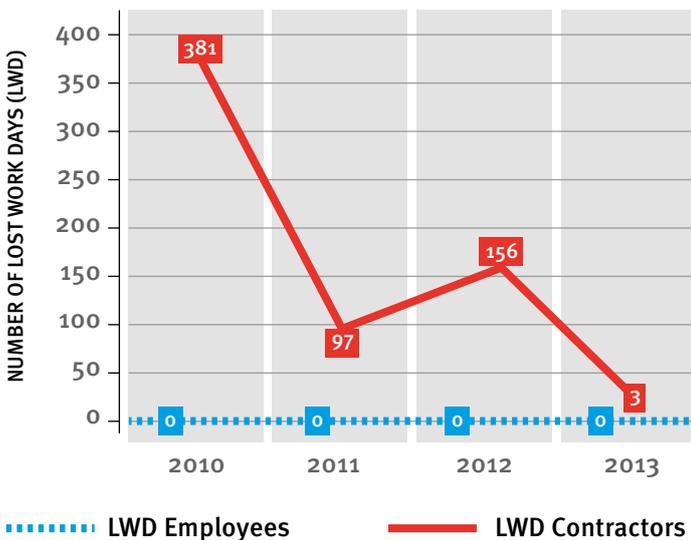
Though OMV Petrom leaders could have been satisfied with the results of these activities, they wanted to reach everyone who works on the site, including contractors. To target external workers, a specific task team was created on each site. The task team developed an approach heavily influenced by the DuPont 6-Step Approach for Contractor Safety Management – a methodology for selecting, training and managing contractors that optimises safety outcomes. This approach delivered high-calibre 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.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Günter Schwarz, Director of the Petrobrazí Refinery, sums it up by saying: “Since we began our work with DuPont, many things have changed. Our safety culture and awareness has definitely improved. The number of incidents has dropped dramatically and that has also had a marked effect on our productivity.”

Petrobrazí can now report that its last employee lost workday case was in 2007. Of course the change in attitudes and behaviour took some time to take hold with contractors, but from 2010 Petrobrazí has also seen a marked improvement on that front. Numbers of lost workdays for contractors have dropped from 381 in 2010 to only three in 2013. Clearly, the new systems introduced since 2008 have bedded down and continue to show good results.



SAFETY IS A CONTINUOUS EFFORT

Although a good number of years have passed since OMV Petrom began working with DuPont, the refinery continues with the programmes, systems and audits originally put in place to assess, measure and promote safety attitudes and performance. “All the activities we set up in 2008 with DuPont have become daily routine,” Ms Tudor says. To good effect, as safety performance figures show. However, inspired by the immense turnaround the refinery has seen since starting work with DuPont in 2008, it has gone on to add new initiatives. In addition to the monthly safety audits, senior managers conduct walk-arounds in the plants twice a month together with line managers to see for themselves how safely work is being carried out. In 2013, the Petrobrazí refinery launched a Safety Gatekeeping initiative to check that all people on site have permits and are adhering to the required safety standards. Since January 2014, Petrobrazí also organises monthly face-to-face employee and senior management meetings to encourage safety discussions and interaction. Each month focuses on a particular topic, such as work permits in January 2014. Employees are encouraged to raise any issues and make safety suggestions.

OMV Petrom is just as keen for contractors to continue to operate safely. So the Petrobrazí refinery holds a monthly contractor meeting, with active participation currently running at 98%. This comes in addition to the new contractor training introduced in 2013 to ensure they understand and adhere to their license to operate and the license to sign. The training ends with an exam. If contractors do not pass it the first time, they get a second chance. However, if they fail again, access to Petrobrazí is forbidden. That may sound tough, but it has helped OMV Petrom in Petrobrazí to work at more than industry best practice safety levels.

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The change brought about after the collaboration with DuPont looks set to have made a lasting impression. As Esat Birgen, DuPont Account Manager and member of the OMV Petrom project delivery team says: “the approach taken by the leadership opened the hearts and minds of the staff. This started at the top, and fostered trust not only in the capabilities of the management teams, but also of each individual to ensure safe performance.”

He analyses the primary reasons for OMV Petrom’s success as follows: “The project thrived under the visionary leadership of senior executives as well as the dedicated and tireless work of project teams. 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 safety programme, OMV’s corporate management is launching a common initiative for all three refineries that belong to the OMV Group. Focusing on incident investigation, risk assessment, contractor management, communication and process safety management, the intention is to close the gaps and align the performance at all refineries. Perhaps the best outcome of all though is, as Ms Tudor points out, that: “people are very proud of their safety achievements.” That in itself is a key motor to on-going safety improvements.



In 2010, OMV Petrom was recognised 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,” Andrew Sharman, president of the jury explains.

“We were very pleased to recognise OMV Petrom for its achievements and commitment to safety excellence and the welfare of its employees.”



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SAFETY RESOURCES



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DuPont International Operations Sàrl
 Chemin du Pavillon 2, P.O. Box 50
 CH-1218 Le Grand Saconnex
 Switzerland
 +41 22 717 5920

