

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



2008 has been an eventful and exciting year especially in the last few months. Many of us would have had the painful experience of seeing our savings and investments fall drastically in value. For some, just holding onto a job is worry enough. So it is not a great mystery if we become distracted and take our eye off the ball. The workload does not decrease, if anything, workload has increased in volume and complexity. As Environment, Safety and Health (EHS)

professionals, we are all too aware that such periods of high stress are the most “dangerous”. All too frequently, accidents occur. It behooves us as professionals to counter these tendencies by taking action to raise the awareness level of fellow workers at our work sites. We have control of this and we can act purposefully. The bigger problem is elsewhere. Our senior management has the responsibility of running the whole business and turning a profit. EHS is just one of the areas for attention. Of course, we all say safety is number one but it is not so easy to live this belief.

The current economic situation presents a monumental challenge to both the senior management and EHS or Loss Prevention leaders/professionals in the process industries to maintain the integrity of the EHS management system and programs. Cost cutting is the order of the day. It is inevitable that costs and expenses associated with EHS loss prevention programs will be under scrutiny like any other business area. We all will have to learn to do more with less. Knowing where to cut will be crucial. To make matters even more challenging, structural changes are taking place. For example, lean manufacturing technologies, flatter organizational structures, multi-tasking work force, non-traditional and innovative work practices have come or will soon come to the workplace. All these raise concerns about potential negative impacts on EHS loss prevention programs.

What can senior management do? They must stay even more informed and knowledgeable of EHS loss prevention while seeking every opportunity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs so as to maintain, if not continually improve, the integrity of these programs. This recommendation is being made because of the observation that there are gaps of understanding between senior management and the EHS loss prevention leaders/professionals on how to maintain the integrity of the company's EHS programs. These gaps are even wider if there is no EHS loss prevention professional presence in the senior management team at corporate and site levels.

Lean manufacturing is becoming more and more common in industries as its prime emphasis is on eliminating wastes, right first time, etc. Actually EHS loss prevention programs have the same aims. By preventing accidents and any kind of loss incidents, ‘waste’ is minimized or even eliminated. How? Accidents and incidents are ‘wastes’ simply because time and resources are needed to conduct accident /incident investigations, let alone the downtime incurred, equipment loss and repair, and the pain and suffering suffered by the person/s who may have been injured. Unwanted attention is also attracted from regulatory authorities. The list goes on. In a nutshell, to prevent accidents or incidents from happening (i.e. preventing “wastes” from being generated) more needs to be done to ensure every single element of the EHS loss prevention management system is fully implemented and maintained. This would increase the “right first time” score of lean manufacturing.

Does this mean we are going to incur more EHS expense in these trying economic times? Not really – if a proper risk management system is implemented to effectively and efficiently manage the EHS loss prevention program.

I wish everyone

*A Happy and Safe  
Holiday Season and all of 2009.*