Issues in Managing Contractor Safety in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT
Contractor Safety can be one of the more challenging Process Safety Management elements to implement in any facility. Considering the additional challenges of managing contractors from different countries, cultures, languages, levels of understanding and, adding to that the size and number of expansion projects ongoing at many facilities in the region, it is easy to see the challenges of effectively managing contractor safety in the Middle East.

Contractor Management has been recognized as a contributing factor in many of the world’s largest PSM accidents, in particular the Phillips 66 Polyethylene explosion in 1989. Contractor Management was therefore added to the US OSHA PSM requirements. While the Phillips Pasadena, TX, incident occurred over 20 years ago, the management of contractors working within process facilities remains a weak link in the prevention of fires, explosions and accidental chemical releases and many facilities around the world. It is a weak link largely due to short comings in effectively communicating the potential consequences and sheer magnitude of potential hazards to the contract workforce, who many times are construction oriented and not knowledgeable in process operations.

This paper will examine the critical issues of contractor safety management including training, safety performance evaluation, and communicating hazard information within facilities in the Middle East. In the Middle East, contractor safety management is compounded by the historical lack of focus on contractor safety, diverse workforce and the backgrounds of the labor force. Special activities, such as simultaneous operations, turnarounds, and very large workforce expansions place an additional risk on the facility operator and the contract workforce.

The purpose of this paper is to relay advice and guidance on developing an effective contractor safety element, establishing contractor qualification metrics and implementing a contractor PSM program within organization in the Middle East.