Process Safety for the Common Folk

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ABSTRACT

Process safety is a discipline that requires a relatively high degree of competence in engineering and as such sometimes it gets misapplied, or even worse, not used at all because of that lack of knowledge. This seems to be prevalent in smaller and medium-sized companies whose resources are more limited than at large companies, although during tough economic times not enough resources are applied even in those larger companies. The effect is a potentially very serious impact on the employees’ health and well being as well as on others, such as the neighboring communities. Because of the lack of resources there is a tendency to either ignore the regulations hoping to be under the radar of the regulatory agencies, or to water down the process safety program, artificially reducing the number of safety recommendations, undertaking changes without a good safety review, reducing training, and skimping on equipment maintenance. The resulting increased risk is not well understood by management until it is too large. This leads to a need of simple tools for understanding, measuring, and managing risk in facilities where there is nobody with that knowledge, and a need for uncomplicated tools to manage necessary process safety activities in those and other facilities. A description of what can be done, where the priorities should be put, and proposed tools will be discussed.