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USW Health and Safety Activists Join Management at Triangle of Prevention Conference to Improve Worker-Driven Program

USW Local 10-1 hosted the Triangle of Prevention (TOP) conference Sept. 26-28 at its union hall in South Philadelphia. Local 10-1 and Philadelphia Energy Solutions participate in TOP.

Over 50 USW and company participants involved in TOP, as well as a refinery local interested in the program, attended to have questions answered, learn ways to improve the program, network, engage in refresher training and acknowledge the accomplishments of two TOP sites.

One conference session focused on using refresher health and safety training to build involvement in TOP.

During the union-only session, the attendees discussed how to grow participation at existing sites, expand TOP to other locations, and increase management participation in the TOP annual meetings. Each site reported on its program successes and challenges. The union participants also elected two new members of the advisory group to represent the paper and oil sectors.

TOP Recognition

A highlight of the labor-management sessions was the presentation of the 2017 Glenn Erwin Award to Local 9-675, representing the TOP site at the 3M plant in Guin, Ala., for a major near-miss investigation, and Local 912's acceptance of the 2017 Fallen Workers Memorial Award for integration of the TOP program into the health, safety and environment department at PBF's Toledo Refining Company in Oregon, Ohio.

"TOP helps us prevent an incident or near miss

from happening so everyone goes home safe," said Local 13-750 TOP alternate representative Carmine Frangella from the Shell Chemical plant in Norco, La. Frangella is a member of the TOP advisory group, which makes recommendations on the program to Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) staffers.

Oil, gas and petrochemical workers also get to go home safe because TOP focuses on sharing lessons learned so that near misses and incidents do not repeat themselves.

"What happened at one site might happen at another site, even though it is another company," said Kevin Theriot, Local 13-750 TOP representative from Shell's Convent, La., refinery. Theriot served as the emcee for the conference and is a member of the advisory group.

Building Cooperation

Union dues dollars do not go into TOP. Companies that participate as a TOP site pay for the program along with grants obtained by the TMC staff.

It is a benefit members receive for being in a union. And companies are helped by TOP as well.

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Participants at the 2017 TOP conference at the LU 10-1 union hall. Photo: Mike Hancock, LU 9-562 retiree

Company Support Mandatory for TOP Program

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“We want to make sure the company takes credit, as well as the union, for the trainings. We can provide the backup for what the company is being called upon to prove to regulators, especially after an incident,” said John Scardella, TMC program administrator.

“Cookie” Sonnier from Local 13-423 at the Motiva refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, an active TOP participant, described how essential management support is for the program:

“For TOP to work, you have to be able to work with your company. If you don’t have company support, it’s not going to be successful.

“The company people may tell each other about health and safety incidents, but it does not get to the rank-and-file. As workers, we have to let the company know we want their support. When it comes to people’s safety, there shouldn’t be conflicts. You are working toward a goal together, not against each other,” he said.

For More Information

If you are interested in the TOP program, you can contact TOP Program Coordinator Steve Doherty, sdoherty@uswtmc.org, (o) 412-562-2561 and TMC Program Administrator John Scardella, jscardella@uswtmc.org, (o) 412-562-2582.

Worker-Driven Triangle of Prevention Program Helps Improve Workplace Health and Safety

During the 1980s and 1990s numerous catastrophic fires, explosions and toxic releases plagued the U.S. petrochemical industry, causing workers to suffer horrific deaths and injuries.

Consultant-driven safety programs, where workers and their behavior were seen as the predominate cause for occupational injuries and illnesses, proliferated during these decades.

Tired of this behavioral safety, blame-the-worker approach, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Union in the mid-1990s enlisted a team of rank-and-file members who were health and safety activists with experience on the shop floor to develop a new system.

Behavioral Shortfalls

OCAW member Glenn Erwin was on that team, and he and the others observed that if there was an incident, management’s first reaction after conducting an investigation was to blame employees and discipline or terminate them.

This employee focus ignored other factors that cause incidents, such as inadequate design and engineering of systems, delayed maintenance and inspection, mitigation and warning systems that fail, lack of or inadequate training, pressure to take shortcuts and ignore procedures to reach production goals, inadequate documentation when a production change is made, management decision to ignore safety warnings, and inadequate personal protective equipment.

Management’s view was that health and safety was its prerogative, so workers were not allowed to investigate incidents with company staff. No one felt ownership over the company safety programs. However, companies gave the illusion of control through employees watching others conduct their work tasks to see if they were working safely.

Another problem the team saw with these behavioral-based health and safety programs was that management focused on slips, trips, falls, and “struck-by” incidents.

Companies measured safety narrowly through the OSHA recordable rate, which only counted worker injuries.

When a disaster occurred—like an explosion, fire and major release—management finally paid attention to process safety. Process safety concerns managing the integrity of operating systems, assets (equipment) and processes that handle hazardous substances to prevent unplanned releases which could result in major incidents.

Inevitably, nothing ever was learned from these incidents and they would be repeated.

Breaking the Mold

Erwin and his team created a pro-active program which the OCAW dubbed the “Triangle of Prevention” (TOP). TOP has three sides: union design and leadership, systems of safety training and investigations, and comprehensive tracking of results.

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(left to right) Louis Tharp, LU 265, Shell Chemical, Mobile, Ala.; Lori Aldridge Smith, LU 9-1535, Essity (SCA), Barton, Ala.; Carmine Frangella, LU 13-750, Shell Chemical, Norco, La.; John Henninger, LU 10-1, Philadelphia Energy Solutions, Phila., Pa.; Jeff Wright, LU 13-423, Motiva, Port Arthur, Texas; Kevin Theriot, LU 13-750, Shell, Convent, La.; Jaret Marquez, LU 13-487, Valero, Sunray, Texas; and Matt Velker, LU 912, PBF Toledo Refining Complex, Oregon, Ohio. Photo: Mike Hancock, LU 9-562 retiree

Workers Not Disciplined for Reporting Near Misses

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The team devised the program so that workers and their union have ownership over their plant's health and safety conditions since they operate the plant, day in and day out. They know when a piece of equipment, a unit and/or a process is not running correctly and could cause a catastrophic event.

By being involved in TOP, workers help management operate safely to avoid catastrophic incidents that cost lives, injuries, disabilities, lawsuits and regulatory fines.

Companies and grants pay for TOP; no union dollars go into the program. It is a union benefit that all employees receive. The Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) administers TOP and conducts trainings. Glenn Erwin served as TMC's TOP program coordinator and retired in 2012.

Systems of Safety

TOP's foundation is the seven systems of safety: design and engineering, mitigation devices, maintenance and inspection, warning devices, training, procedures, and personal protective equipment.

TMC trains workers in the systems of safety and, in turn, they learn to train others, to conduct near-miss and incident investigations, and to become site-based program leaders, including as TOP representatives.

Focus is on establishing a health and safety culture, so everyone in a plant—workers, managers and non-represented staff employees—is given an 8-hour initial TOP awareness training, followed up with annual 4-hour refresher training. TOP worker-trainers also give systems of safety training to contractors.

Workers are encouraged to report near misses because companies in the TOP program agree to a no-discipline policy for reporting or being involved in a near miss.

When near misses and incidents occur, they are viewed as happening because of multiple causes, including one or more root causes, each of which is linked to a failure in one or more of the seven systems of safety. It is a holistic approach.

TOP investigators include union workers and management using TOP investigation methods such as logic tree diagramming. This method applies the systems of safety to analysis of what happened in a near miss or incident so the root causes can be uncovered.

"Locals have applied logic tree diagramming to settle grievances when companies want to discipline workers involved in an incident," said John Scardella, TMC program administrator. "Anyone can learn this method, and it can't be manipulated. The logic tree is fact-based, no matter the outcome.

"Identifying accidents is not enough. Finding and fixing hazards is not enough. You need to identify root causes," he added.

Tracking and Sharing

TOP involves comprehensive tracking of systems of safety performance. Near misses, process upsets, releases, incidents and root causes are tracked to identify system

failures and trends.

Once root causes are discovered, TOP personnel recommend solutions to eliminate or control the hazard(s) using the highest system of safety possible (design and engineering). Recommendations are tracked to completion so workers see positive results from their reporting of near misses and incidents.

The last step of the TOP process is to share the lessons learned from investigations of near misses and incidents across a site, across a company's entire operations and across the industry. This process is critical because it helps prevent near misses and incidents from reoccurring so workplaces and surrounding communities are safer, injuries prevented and lives saved.

For More Information

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Gerard Borne, LU 13-750 TOP representative, Shell, Norco, La. Photo: Mike Hancock, LU 9-562 retiree

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Oil Locals Raise Awareness of “Precarious Work”

Precarious work refers to part-time, temporary and contract jobs that generally pay less, have few or no benefits, and lack job security and protection. In other countries, this non-standard employment is poorly paid and workers cannot support their families.

The USW joined oil and gas unions representing workers at Shell operations in five continents to take a stand against precarious work on Oct. 7, 2017—the World Day for Decent Work. The union canvassed local unions to raise awareness that precarious work is a threat at Shell, while other IndustriALL Global Union affiliates in Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, and Pakistan organized activities and demonstrations.

These activities grew out of the Shell Global Union Network meeting held in the Netherlands on Nov. 25-26, 2016. The meeting highlighted the increasing use of precarious workers and contracts, particularly in countries like Nigeria, Argentina and the Netherlands. In Nigeria, Shell employs more than 50,000 contract workers compared to only 4,500 permanent employees, according to studies. The unions agreed to participate in IndustriALL’s campaign to Stop Precarious Work after this meeting.

The USW has been pushing the oil industry to hire full-time maintenance workers to handle daily maintenance work instead of using contractors.

GET READY FOR BARGAINING CHECKLIST!

We will be engaging in local and National Oil Bargaining in 2019 with mobilization activities prior to and during negotiations, so now is the time to prepare! Here is your checklist for you and your local unions to help mobilizing run smoothly:

- ✓ Set aside money each pay period for your personal strike fund in case you and your coworkers are forced out on strike by the oil industry.
- ✓ Develop—if not already completed—a Communications & Action Team (CAT Team).
- ✓ Practice using your CAT team by handing out The OilWorker, your local union newsletter (if you have one) and local union information to each and every member during non-work hours in non-work areas (break rooms, plant gate).
- ✓ Gather each member’s HOME email address so the local union can send out bargaining information.
- ✓ Sign up (if you have not done so) for the oil text message list (see instructions on page 3).
- ✓ Check out the USW Oil Workers Facebook page and click “like” at <https://www.facebook.com/OilBargaining/>



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