

# Wilkins Safety Group

## Weekly Update Newsletter



Welcome to this issue - Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011 - of our Update Newsletter

**Please feel free to forward this newsletter to colleagues and friends.**

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### Permits to work.



#### WHAT ARE PERMITS-TO-WORK?

A permit-to-work system is a formal written system used to control certain types of work that are potentially hazardous.

A permit-to-work is a document which specifies the work to be done and the precautions to be taken. Permits-to-work form an essential part of safe systems of work for many maintenance activities. They allow work to start only after safe procedures have been defined and they provide a clear record that all foreseeable hazards have been considered.

A permit is needed when maintenance work can only be carried out if normal safeguards are dropped or when new hazards are introduced by the work. Examples are, **entry into vessels, hot work and pipeline breaking.**

#### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

An HSE survey showed that a third of all accidents in the chemical industry were maintenance-related, the largest single cause being a lack of, or deficiency in, permit-to-work systems.



In a study of small and medium-sized chemical factories:

- two-thirds of companies were not checking systems adequately;
- two-thirds of permits did not adequately identify potential hazards;
- nearly half dealt poorly with isolation of plant, electrical equipment, etc.;
- a third of permits were unclear on what personal protective clothing was needed;
- a quarter of permits did not deal adequately with formal hand-back of plant once maintenance work had finished;
- in many cases little thought had been given to permit form design.

While aimed primarily at the chemical industry the guidance provided may have application in other industries.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Don't assume that your system is a good one just because you have not yet had a serious accident. You should critically review your system and ask yourself the following questions.

### Information

- Is the permit-to-work system fully documented, laying down:
  - how the system works;
  - the jobs it is to be used for;
  - the responsibilities and training of those involved; and
  - how to check its operation?
- Is there clear identification of who may authorise particular jobs (and any limits to their authority)?
- Is there clear identification of who is responsible for specifying the necessary precautions (e.g. isolation, emergency arrangements, etc)?
- Is the permit form clearly laid out?
- Does it avoid statements or questions which could be ambiguous or misleading?
- Is it designed to allow for use in unusual circumstances?
- Does it cover contractors?

### Selection and training

- Are those who issue permits sufficiently knowledgeable concerning the hazards and precautions associated with the plant and proposed work? Do they have the imagination and experience to ask enough 'what if' questions to enable them to identify all potential hazards?
- Do staff and contractors fully understand the importance of the permit-to-work system and are they trained in its use?



### Description of the work

- Does the permit clearly identify the work to be done and the associated hazards?
- Can plans and diagrams be used to assist in the description of the work to be done, its location and limitations?
- Is the plant adequately identified, e.g. by discrete number or tag to assist issuers and users in correctly taking out and following permits?
- Is a detailed work method statement given for more complicated tasks?

### Hazards and precautions

- Does the system require the removal of hazards and, where this is not reasonably practicable, effective control? Are the requirements of The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 (COSHH) and other relevant legislation known and followed by those who issue the permits?
- Does the permit state the precautions that have been taken and those that are needed while work is in progress? For instance, are isolations specified and is it clear what personal protective equipment should be used?

- Do the precautions cover residual hazards and those that might be introduced by the work, e.g. welding fume and vapour from cleaning solvents?
- Do the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 apply? If so, has a full risk assessment identified the significant risks and identified alternative methods of working or necessary precautions?

### Procedures

- Does the permit contain clear rules about how the job should be controlled or abandoned in the case of an emergency?
- Does the permit have a hand-back procedure incorporating statements that the maintenance work has finished and that the plant has been returned to production staff in a safe state?
- Are time limitations included and is shift changeover dealt with?
- Are there clear procedures to be followed if work has to be suspended for any reason?
- Is there a system of cross-referencing when two or more jobs subject to permits may affect each other?
- Is the permit displayed at the job?
- Are jobs checked regularly to make sure that the relevant permit-to-work system is still relevant and working properly?

### ESSENTIALS OF THE PERMIT-TO-WORK FORM

The permit-to-work form must help communication between everyone involved. It should be designed by the company issuing the permit, taking into account individual site conditions and requirements.

Separate permit forms may be required for different tasks, such as hot work and entry into confined spaces, so that sufficient emphasis can be given to the particular hazards present and precautions required.

If you are a client of **The Wilkins Safety Group** and require some sample permits, then do contact us on [info@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:info@wilkinssafety.co.uk) stating what activity and they will send you some templates.

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### TRAINING COURSES



Have you booked your place on our health and safety training courses yet?

The courses are:

### **H & S for SME owners/directors – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

This one day course addresses the requirements under the 'Health & safety at Work act 1974' and the 'Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999' to ensure all organisations are complying with legislation. The session will address the legal requirement of the Employer and the responsibilities necessary to ensure your compliance in the workplace and on site.

### **Supervising Health and Safety Course – 27/28/29<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

Accidents and illness can result in disability, death or incapacity for work. The supervisor is in an ideal and very responsible position to influence, monitor and train employees. They can also ensure that managers are informed, persuaded, encouraged or pressured into providing for better health and safety standards

### **Construction Site Health and Safety Awareness – 5<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

Designed to provide Health & Safety Awareness for all those working in construction, this 1 day course provides the elements required to achieve the safety element of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme registration certificate

### **Asbestos Awareness Half Day Course – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

**Asbestos training is a legal requirement** If you work on buildings built or refurbished before the year 2000, asbestos could be present. You will need awareness training so you know how to avoid the risks. If you employ these people, you **must** train them

### **Office Safety Half Day Course – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

In 2001/2002 employers reported 851 major injuries and 2,526 over 3-day injuries in office-based premises. This course has been designed to cover the health and safety requirements in relation to office premises. It will ensure that delegates gain a full understanding of their legal responsibilities, learn how to prevent accidents and know what is required regarding welfare facilities and fire prevention and control.

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Further details and booking forms available on:

[http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk/training\\_dates.html](http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk/training_dates.html).

If you would like to discuss any of the issues highlighted in this newsletter then drop an email to Jon on [jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk) or call the office 01458 253682



Your Business is Safer  
Your Business is Safer in Our Hands