

**HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE
Focus of the Month**

Issue No 4

Maintenance Training

For Service & Maintenance Engineers no two days are ever the same. They are the people who monitor, repair and maintain all the building services, heating, ventilation, lighting, vehicles and production machinery. They must plan their work carefully to cause minimum disruption whilst also ensuring that Health & Safety for all concerned is maintained at all times.

During 2007 – 2008 the following injuries to process plant & machine operatives were reported to the HSE. How many of these involved Maintenance Engineers is difficult to determine.

Fatal injuries	Non-fatal major injuries	Over-3-day injuries	Total injuries
55	6 522	26 693	33 270

Many engineers do not see a need to carry out risk assessments or refer to Safe Working Procedures; after all they consider that they have been repairing machinery for most of their working life. Much of the training provided to engineers concentrates on the technical aspects of the job, rather than the H & S implications. It is only when something goes wrong that the inevitable questions get raised:

- What training was provided?
- Where are the risk assessments, Safe Working Procedures or Permits?

Example of a recent incident.



Pipe being pressure-tested with hydraulic oil, held at 6,000psi...

As engineer reached inside Perspex box to operate pressure relief valve, hand brushed against pipe, just as the pipe split.

Fine jet of oil made a 6mm cut in hand, with 12mm circle of lifted skin around it. Extensive damage to hand.

5 hours after incident, surgeon began removing oil. Carpal tunnel opened to relieve pressure on crushed nerves. Third surgery followed on day five. The Engineer was off work for 6 months.



A Generic Risk Assessment can cover the majority of tasks carried out by engineers. If supported with Safe Working Procedures and some basic H & S training the risks can be significantly reduced.

A typical training course or an induction programme for an engineer that concentrates on the health & safety aspects would cover the following areas.

1. H & S legislation

- a. The requirements of PUWER 98.
- b. Working at height regulations
- c. Supply of machinery safety regulations (Machinery – EN Standards)
- d. Lone working

2. Risk assessments and safe working procedures

- a. Identification of hazards
- b. Identification of risk levels
- c. Development of suitable control measures
- d. Permits to work
- e. Documented safe working procedures.

3. Maintenance activities & use of equipment

- a. Hot working/welding
- b. Working with electricity
- c. COSHH
- d. PPE
- e. Use of lifting equipment

4. Inspection requirements

- a. Inspection and use of ladders
- b. Inspection of fall arrest systems
- c. Inspection of tools & equipment

The effect of not providing training is that engineers will continue to:

- Fall from heights,
- Receive electric shocks,
- Suffer from burns, and
- Be exposed to chemicals and substances.

All companies have a legal requirement under HASWA to provide Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision and a moral responsibility to look after their employees.

Investment in a basic H & S course can save an awful lot of heartache

DISCLAIMER: This is the opinion of the NASS H&S Committee but only the courts can interpret the law. All employers should refer to the legislation.