



PROCESS SAFETY LEADERSHIP GROUP, PSLG

Maintain the Focus on Process Safety Management during the Economic Downturn

Tony Traynor, chair of the Process Safety Leadership Group (PSLG), has today underlined the importance of maintaining high standards of process safety for major hazard industries during difficult times ahead as a result of the global economic downturn.

Tony Traynor said: “The hazards and risks associated with our industry can not be easily turned on and off according to variations in the business and financial markets. In this difficult trading environment, we must maintain our focus on process safety management. Capital expenditure budgets will become squeezed and we are likely to see plant and equipment downtime increased. We know that maintenance programmes are likely to be stretched and there will be pressure on manning levels and recruitment. Nevertheless cost savings must not be at the expense of safety and environmental controls needed to maintain the integrity of major hazard facilities.”

He went on to add: “Process downtime provides an ideal opportunity to undertake process safety reviews, catch up on any backlogs in keeping systems and procedures up to date, and provide refresher training for key staff.”

Peter Baker, Acting Director of the HSE’s Hazardous Installations Directorate, on behalf of the COMAH Competent Authority endorsed these views and added:

“The COMAH Competent Authority recognises the difficult business climate and the additional pressures this will place on industry’s ability to maintain standards of process safety leadership, management and control. Nevertheless, there continues to be a compelling business case for all businesses across the petrochemical industry – whether subject to COMAH or not - to invest in and maintain standards of health, safety and environmental protection.

Industry and regulators alike will need to be vigilant over the coming months to signs of deterioration in plant integrity, control systems, containment and mitigation measures that are likely to adversely impact on the safety of plant and give rise to an increased risk of a major accident to people or the environment.

The Competent Authority will continue to work with COMAH operators to help them maintain the necessary standards, but will also be prepared to intervene using our normal enforcement powers particularly if we judge that serious deficiencies arise at COMAH sites as a result of cutbacks.”

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Notes for Editors

1. The Process Safety Leadership Group (PSLG), a joint industry and regulators group, was established in September 2007 to drive forward high standards in process safety leadership and to complete the implementation of Buncefield Major Incident Investigation Board's recommendations.
2. PSLG comprises representatives from United Kingdom Petroleum Industries Association (UKPIA), the Tank Storage Association (TSA), United Kingdom Onshore Pipeline Operators Association (UKOPA), Chemical Industries Association (CIA), UNITE the Union, Environment Agency (EA), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
3. HSE and the EA (in England and Wales) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) (in Scotland), are jointly responsible (the Competent Authority) for regulating non-nuclear major hazards industrial sites in Great Britain under the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1999 (COMAH). COMAH requires operators of major hazard sites subject to the Regulations to take all measures necessary to prevent major accidents and limit their consequences to persons and the environment.
4. Operators of top tier COMAH sites (like Buncefield) are required to submit written safety reports to the Competent Authority; and to prepare emergency plans to deal with the consequences of a major accident. Operators and others (including contractors, designers and suppliers) also have relevant duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and under other environmental legislation to protect land, air and water, including the Water Resources Act 1991.

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