

Accident investigation



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Accident Investigation: Seven Lessons in Death and Injury Prevention The CBS February bulletin explores the seven ways of how to prevent and avoid unnecessary deaths and injuries in a hot work-related environment. After defining the concept of hot work, the bulletin analyzed -- from which the seven lessons are drawn -- eleven hot work accidents involving menial job that require “ burning, welding, or similar operation” (as cited in “ Seven Key,” 2010, p. 2). Although each of these eleven accidents has different setting or story, all of them share common features such as the presence of flammable vapor and the workers’ lack of knowledge of its presence. These 11 accidents are divided into two parts: (1) the absence of gas monitoring; and (2) the lack of proper gas testing (“ Seven Key,” 2010).

The bulletin mentioned about OSHA’s (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) standard practices that should be critically followed during the work’s operation. The OSHA hot work standard 29 CFR 1910. 252 refers to guidelines in performing welding, brazing, and other similar field operations. Usually, OSHA discourages hot work in an environment that is prone to explosion. However, OSHA fails to directly mandate the utilization of combustible gas detector before and during the hot work (“ Seven Key,” 2010).

Of the seven lessons drawn, two of these lessons are given emphasis: first is analyzing the hazards; and second is monitoring the atmosphere (“ Seven Key,” 2010). To analyze the hazards means conducting assessment in the work field. Workers or technical professions identify the work’s scope, study possible hazards, and look for ways of controlling or eliminating these hazards. On the other hand, to monitor the atmosphere means to check, from time to time, if there’s a presence of flammable gas using the

combustible gas detector (“ Seven Key,” 2010). Clearly, these lessons offer methods or procedures on how to conduct hot works before those works are carried out.

On the one hand, the bulletin’s premise on the third lesson (i. e., monitoring the atmosphere) is quite heavy, if not redundant. In conducting gas monitoring, says the bulletin, it should be done before and during the hot work operation (“ Seven Key,” 2010). I wonder if it can be done only before, no more after, the hot work activity. This has three main implications: (1) the combustible gas detector is unreliable; (2) the technical men employing such detector do not know how to properly use them; (3) there’s no use of monitoring the atmosphere before hot work begins. Moreover, the bulletin failed to expound the specific meaning or example of the first lesson, namely, use alternatives. In the case of EMC Used Oil Corporation, for instance, the bulletin failed to explicitly make an example or possible scenario wherein the use of alternatives is desirable. I wonder what the welder could do as an “ alternative” to avoid the powerful explosion. Furthermore, the argument of the sixth lesson seems to be trivial. It appears that workers, besides mastering their field of work, are also required to master the techniques of correct hot work procedures. In the accident that occurred in the A. V. Thomas Produce, for instance, the Spanish-speaking welders are advised to also learn the safe hot work procedures (“ Seven Key,” 2010).

At the concluding remarks, the bulletin stated the contrast between the existence of good practices or guidelines (such as outlined by OSHA) and the occurrence of frequent deaths and injuries related to hot work. The bulletin expressed recommendations for hot work-related accidents to be prevented

or avoided. It says that when the seven lessons drawn from the 11 accidents are strictly followed, then prevention of future hot work accident could materialize ("Seven Key," 2010). To my mind, however, the problems concerning hot work accidents should be addressed not to the workers but rather to the companies involved. The companies must strictly adhere to the existing policies and procedures in conducting hot work operations.

Reference

U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. (2010, February).

Seven key lessons to

prevent worker deaths during hot work in and around tanks: Effective hazard assessment

and use of combustible gas monitoring will save lives. Safety Bulletin.

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