Making paper safely at Rigid Paper

The client, Rigid Paper, was under regulatory pressure to comply with guidelines published under the title ‘making paper safely’.

These guidelines were produced by the paper making industry in response to an unacceptable level of injuries and accidents within the sector. Full compliance should have been achieved by August 2001 but Rigid Paper was finding it very difficult to produce even an action plan with timetable, which is the first stage of the process.

Issues at stake for Rigid included a lack of manpower and finance to implement any of ‘making paper safely’. There was also a workforce culture of non-involvement and an ineffective safety management system incapable of achieving any breakthrough in safety culture. These factors were compounded by the fact that the company had been bought recently by a firm from Europe, where the concept of ‘making paper safely’ had not been adopted.

As a result, the parent company was unsure about the benefits of increasing expenditure to achieve compliance with the guidelines.

Solution

The project scope was to identify all hazards and to form an action plan to take Rigid Paper onto full ‘making paper safely’ compliance.

To do this, we formed a small team comprising Rigid’s health and safety advisor, one of their shift managers and two charge hands, all supported by the chief engineer and managing director.

Over a period of four weeks, the four-person team identified 306 new guards and extensions to existing ones, as well as 70 modifications. They developed a method by which the principal stakeholders could be fully consulted about the proposed designs for guards and safety systems. This ensured a greater degree of acceptance of the designs than previous impositions, which had required further expensive amendments.

During this time, the team identified that health, safety and environmental management was inadequate in the company. Using a process-mapping tool that we supplied, the team was able to identify areas for improvement. They proposed an alternative management system with a full matrix of identified accountabilities and responsibilities.

“Involvement of the people who have to operate and maintain the machinery is the key to success.”

Manufacturing Manager
This system is based on auditing safety culture rather than statistics and has been fully adopted by the company.

By engaging the workforce rather than an outside agent, we were able to help Rigid Paper achieve stage 1 of ‘making paper safely’, the action plan, in a relatively short time. And by engaging with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Rigid Paper were able to persuade the regulatory body of their significant progress towards full compliance. They also secured the director of the parent company’s involvement. In doing so, they were able to prove that because they had an action-based management system and had got guarding right first time, the costs of achieving ‘making paper safely’ could be reduced.

**Benefits**
- Completed full hazard assessment of two paper machines and associated ancillary equipment and processes within four weeks
- Identified 306 new guards and extensions in addition to 70 modifications
- Developed a self-prioritising methodology to allow for a timetable to be developed
- Developed and introduced an action-based safety, health and environment management system with full accountabilities and responsibilities mapped
- Introduced full consultation process for the identification of guarding hazards