CASE STUDIES

# USING ´RISK CARDS´ TO ASSESS AND HANDLE RISKS

## 1. Case metadata

- ***Country of origin:***

The Netherlands

- ***Year of publication by agency:***

2009

- ***Sector:***

C24 - Manufacture of basic metals

***Keywords:***

08801A Risk analysis and management

24401C Case studies

24361C Good practice

19641D Risk assessment

20641D Worker participation

## 2. Organisations involved

Corus Tubes BV, CFB

## 3. Description of the case

### *3.1. Introduction*

Corus Tubes Maastricht is a branch of Corus (formerly Hoogovens), an Anglo/Dutch company and the largest steel company in Europe. The Corus Group has production plants in 17 countries, employing a total of 42,000 employees (2009). Corus Tubes Maastricht has 88 employees. It produces and sells a wide range of tubes in various types of steel and in a large number of diameters, wall thicknesses and shapes.

In Corus Tubes there are many risks involved in the processing of raw materials (large rolls of steel), and the production of tubes and their storage (in bundles).There are many tools and equipment which also involve a high risk of injury on lighting equipment production lines. In assembly work, there is increased strain on the forearms, especially because of the high frequency of movements.

In Corus Tubes poor occupational risk management resulted in minor accidents as well as in accidents that led to long-term sickness absenteeism. The company realized that many accidents can be avoided by recognising the risks first and taking preventive action. It is not sufficient only to note the risks; they must be actively removed, through team work.

A few years ago a manager from Corus Tubes Maastricht was on a working visit to a Corus branch in Britain. There he saw employees using risk cards associated with the Fine and Kinney method, a risk index that ascribes particular values to the probability of a risk, the exposure time and the extent of possible damage. Corus Tubes Maastricht decided to introduce the system into their own plant. Now

each employee has a risk card, which describes what the possible problem may be and what employees can do to minimise the safety risk while trying to solve the problem.

## 3.2. Aims

The management of Corus Tube is aware of the fact that in its sector in particular, incorrect assessment of risks can have very serious consequences. The main goals of taking the initiative were to improve the quality of risk assessment, to teach employees how to assess the risks and to involve the employees in actions aimed at risk reduction or elimination.

## 3.3. What was done, and how?

The prevention system at Corus Tubes uses report cards, on which any employee can describe a risk they have noticed (see figure 1). The report card is submitted to the OSH manager and his colleagues, who make sure that the management takes action. The management is obliged to tell the person who submitted the report what action needs to be taken to prevent repetition and when to take action.

The biggest problem with risk assessment is that not everyone has the same idea about what causes the risk. This problem was observed at Corus Tubes Maastricht too, where one person would see a risk as significant and another would see it as 'normal'. For risk assessment the Fine and Kinney method was introduced in 2007 by presenting it to all employees. However research in Maastricht showed that, despite various toolbox talks, there were employees who were still not sure exactly how they were supposed to use the method. To clarify the method, so-called 'risk cards' were produced and issued to every employee (figure 1) at the start of 2008. These two-sided printed cards help employees to assess risks that may arise during the working day and to take the key actions required in response to those risks.

**Figure 1. Risk assessment (Fine and Kinney method)**

| RISK | First aid treatment | Substantial injury | Serious injury | Risk Assessment Table |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Virtually impossible | Low risk | Possible risk | Risk | |
| Is possible | Possible risk | Risk | High risk | |
| Can be expected | Risk | High risk | Very high risk | |

| Risk scale | Action required | Fill in Report Card |
|---|---|---|
| Low RISK | Risk may be acceptable | |
| Possible RISK | Risk requires attention | |
| RISK present | Correction is required. Ensure that the risk is reduced. Report risk to manager immediately. | |
| High RISK | Immediate action required. Ensure that risk is eliminated immediately | |
| VERY HIGH RISK | STOP work and ensure that the risk is eliminated immediately | |

Source: Corus Tubes Maastricht

At Corus Tubes everyone has a risk card in their pocket. With use of these cards each employee can assess risks properly. For example if an employee notices that the hoisting belt he is using to lift tubes is more or less worn out (see box 1) he looks at his card and asks himself the question: could the belt possibly tear? If the answer is yes the card tells him that this could cause serious injury. The back side of the card shows him which action to take: take immediate action and make sure the risk is eliminated. It could be that the hoisting belt is safe to use for a while. This would mean there was less risk of an accident, but the employee concerned would have to report the defect.

**Box 1. Example**

Example:

An employee notices that a hoisting belt he is using is worn.

RISK:

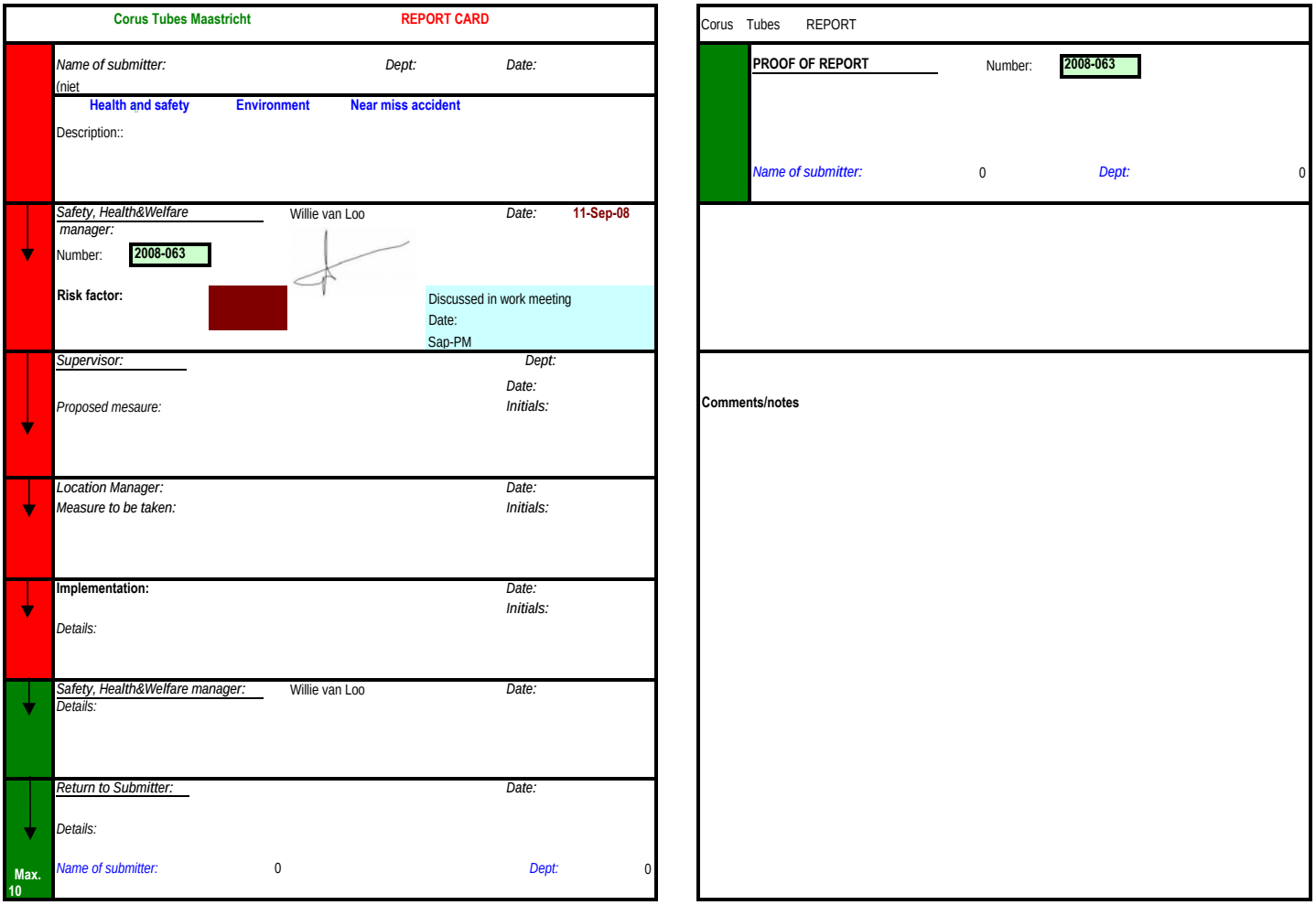
The risk is that the hoisting belt may tear. This is possible and could cause a serious injury = HIGH RISK

RISK SCALE: HIGH RISK = Immediate action required. Ensure the risk is eliminated immediately.

If a risk becomes apparent, it should be reported using a report card (see figure 2). The risk should be described on the card and measures should be taken to prevent the risk occurring again in the future.

Risk assessment has contributed to a good health and safety record at Corus Tubes Maastricht. The card system is much more goal-oriented than pointing out risks at the kind of toolbox talks (information sessions) that Corus Tubes Maastricht was used to. A manager at Corus Tubes Maastricht stresses: ‘Workers may well be paying attention at a toolbox talk, but two weeks later they’ve forgotten what exactly it was about.’

**Figure 2. Report card used in Corus Tubes**



Corus Tubes Maastricht REPORT CARD

Name of submitter: Dept: Date:
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Health and safety Environment Near miss accident
Description::

Safety, Health&Welfare manager: Willie van Loo Date: 11-Sep-08
Number: 2008-063
Risk factor:
Discussed in work meeting
Date:
Sap-PM

Supervisor: Dept:
Date:
Proposed mesaure: Initials:

Location Manager: Date:
Measure to be taken: Initials:

Implementation: Date:
Initials:
Details:

Safety, Health&Welfare manager: Willie van Loo Date:
Details:

Return to Submitter: Date:
Details:
Max. 10
Name of submitter: 0 Dept: 0

Corus Tubes REPORT

PROOF OF REPORT Number: 2008-063
Name of submitter: 0 Dept: 0

Comments/notes

Source: Corus Tubes Maastricht

## 3.4. What was achieved?

Employees make good use of the card system. As an indication, since the introduction of the system the OSH manager received around 200 cards a year from the employees.

Risks in the workplace can never be completely eliminated. But it helps a lot if employees can estimate how dangerous a particular activity might be. Corus Tubes in Maastricht has come up with a simple solution for assessing risk. The employees are now able to use the cards to assess and indicate risks in a correct way.

As a consequence the company has been free of accidents for more than two years. The number of accidents resulting in sick leave has been reduced to zero. The number requiring medical treatment has been reduced by more than 75% since 2006, and the number requiring first aid has been reduced by 65 cases a year. The costs are negligible and the benefits are difficult to express in figures; but in human and social terms the company has made a big leap forward. This is clear from an employee satisfaction survey and the sharp drop in sickness absenteeism of 3.8% a year after the implementation of the system.

## 3.5. Success factors

Success factors in this program were that:

- the management supports the method. The company benefits considerably from it, and the card system does not cost anything. This good practice shows that a good approach can be simple and cheap but effective as well.
- Corus Tubes Maastricht works together with other Dutch Corus branches in a safety and health program called ‘Starship Programme’.
- Employees are taken seriously and can see that the organisation takes the subject seriously too.
- All those involved in the production process have their own role. Everyone can understand it and employee input is taken seriously, which means this good practice makes a positive contribution to the improvement of the health and safety culture within the company. It clearly increases the employees´ understanding of individual risks, including in this case the psychosocial risks.

## 3.6. Further information

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### *3.7. Transferability*

This initiative is easily transferable and widely applicable to many other sectors and countries. It requires both strong management involvement and a will to involve all the workers so that the implementation of the method will work.

## 4. References, resources:

Information provided by the company/organisation in the framework of the Good Practice Award Competition 2008/2009".