



ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTEGRATED QUALITY, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR INDUSTRIAL WASTE LAND RECLAMATION AT APINOR

1. Organisations involved

Apinor

2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

The establishment of the integrated Quality Safety Environment (QSE) management system at Apinor enabled overall organisation of the company's management and in particular safety management, in an industry sector in which this has competitive implications. This management system is consistent with its operations and its experience; it thus supports perfectly the company's growth and is reflected by tangible results. The success of the approach is largely due to the conditions of project support and to investment in the field.

Apinor is a young organisation that was set up in 1991 for industrial waste land reclamation operations. Located near Douai, Apinor is in the heart of the Nord-Pas de Calais region, which contains almost half the industrial waste land in France. Its operations cover decontamination, site reclamation, landfill rehabilitation, industrial demolition, asbestos removal, river work, and the treatment of water and industrial effluents. In 2001, Apinor took over SND (a company specialising in public works and river work, dredging and pile driving). Apinor achieved triple Quality Safety Environment certification in 2002 (ISO 9001, OHSAS 18001 and ISO 14001). This triple certification, which attests to the integration of the safety management system (SMS), is still rare in France, especially in SMEs.

2.2. Aims

The pollution control industry is often criticised for its undemanding level of regulations and code of conduct. The price levels for these activities hardly correspond to the level of requirements and the risks involved in the industry.

Apinor's certification approach, on the other hand, can claim to be consistent with its policy of environmental protection and its concern for risk management. Regarding this, Apinor's goal is not only to settle injury problems but also solve problems of occupational health.

2.3. What was done, and how?

The QSE management approach has been under development since 2000 with the revision of the ISO 9000 standard (version 2000) and a revival of the quality policy initiated in 1995.

The company consulted a specialist consultancy firm that suggested it should adopt the OHSAS reference system, and underlined its compatibility with Apinor's other policies. The Apinor management saw this as an opportunity to distinguish itself from its competitors, as well as to consolidate safety policy in the firm. The QSE approach seemed an ideal way of enhancing and perpetuating the company's management practices.

Design of the QSE reference system required major investment by management and support from consultants between 2001 and 2002. The approach took the form of

- an initial pre-audit of practices and the identification of discrepancies and objectives to be achieved for certification;
- identification of processes;



- management review; and
- pre-audit before certification.

Major work was performed on the content of the system: review by the QSE manager with the consultant and an employee on a fixed-term work contract (for the environmental aspect), analysis with the site personnel and finalisation with senior management (1 day a week for three months).

Management's commitment was obtained following the interim management review performed at the end of 2001. This mobilisation of senior management was decisive in achieving the objectives: it made it possible to confirm the options, encourage everyone to take part in the project and, finally, meet the required implementation deadlines (one year between the two audits). The QSE approach was recognised as a major objective for the company.

The French standards organisation AFAQ issued the triple QSE certification in July 2002. Initially, establishment and application of the SMS were prepared by producing the single document for risk assessment.

At the structural level, the QSE role is performed by a single manager in the head office, reporting directly to the CEO.

At the responsibility level, QSE tasks are delegated to the project manager level (works foremen). Finally, safety is explicitly mentioned as one of the assessment criteria in annual personnel evaluation.

A 50-page document describes the 20 processes in Apinor's operations distinguished by category (6 production processes, 8 support and 6 management processes). This common QSE document refers to numerous procedures and documents in which health and safety questions are covered.

Various documents, tools and methods have been developed and made available in hard-copy or electronic form. They serve as an extremely rich database and a toolbox to control operations in the field. They contain, in particular, a summary of the regulations applicable on site, the lists of products used with their safety data, and a model OSH plan.

The health and safety policy and the company's commitment to it is encapsulated in a precise list of objectives that is revised annually.

2.4. What was achieved?

From the qualitative viewpoint, the results were as follows:

A unified approach to safety

The SMS promotes a uniform approach to safety in the company, between the various site teams and the various strata and positions in the company, with the unification of practices and requirements.

A safety level which reassures the staff

Apinor's standards in matters of safety are relatively high; they extend beyond mere personal protection and concern the whole work organisation. Apinor's staff appreciate this high level of attention to safety. It enables workers to go about their tasks with confidence, even though they often have to work in hazardous environments.

Greater staff awareness of risks and rules

The health and safety management approach has encouraged staff to learn more about the subject and apply it to their jobs. The risks are clearly named and their evaluation is more precise (seriousness, frequency, etc.).

The established procedures, systematic information, training and checks on site have helped everyone to take risks into account and observe the necessary precautions. Learning has been rapid because this concern for safety has now become the norm.

CASE STUDIES

Greater sense of responsibility among staff

The approach not only favoured the learning and understanding of safety instructions. It also changed the value assigned to safety, giving rise to a thorough change in attitudes toward risks and to safety responsibility in general.

Problems faced

Despite the successes achieved in safety management at Apinor, some points can still be improved.

For example, application of the SMS chiefly concerns Apinor's core business (work sites) whereas it would be useful to apply it to other activities. The equipment depot is a case in point.

While the maintenance of equipment is covered by a process, the procedures for and conditions of equipment management are not greatly developed. Supervision of the recommendations that do exist is minimal.

Another potential area of improvement is the sustainability of the system. Divergences are appearing among the supervisory staff concerning the importance of the SMS. For some, now that the goal of certification has been achieved, investment in safety can be relaxed. For others safety remains a priority, as they see certification as merely an indicator of the system's operation.

For Apinor the formalisation of the SMS contrasted with certain features of its style of operation. First, the formalisation of an SMS represents a break with the informal adjustment practices often existing in SMEs.

The problem concerns the tools made available and their suitability for the field (computer systems, etc.). But above all, there is a problem with the considerable workload involved.

2.5. Success factors

The success factors observed are as follows:

Industry culture conducive to safety

Observation shows that the SMS has benefited from an industry context favourable to prioritising safety considerations.

Safety promoted as a strategic issue

The stated objectives, the resources assigned, the checks performed and the repeated attention to safety make it one of the prime concerns of staff and management alike.

Because senior management has promoted safety as a strategic issue the safety practices persist; the change in staff attitudes to the SMS project at the end of 2001 is evidence of this management influence.

Successful integration of the SMS

Safety appears well integrated into Apinor's practices, and safety management has been embedded in the existing management rules. Unlike other companies that completely 'erase' previous approaches when they redesign their operations, at Apinor the design of the system took into account existing procedures and practices.

The SMS was designed at the same time as the introduction of environmental management; the quality management system was also being overhauled at the time. The choice of the OHSAS 18001 reference system helped to coordinate and standardise processes. But the important thing to note is that safety has been organised in coordination with the other approaches. This joint approach to management systems enhances their relevance.

The SMS has been designed as a full management tool for the company and not merely as a protection system. It has proved to be an advantage when tendering for projects and hence contributes to corporate profits.



A rational organisation framework

The main characteristics of this organisation are clear objectives, adequate resources assigned and precise responsibilities. The company has appointed staff solely responsible for safety. In addition, the QSE manager and the safety coordinator have the power to stop site work should the need arise.

Ongoing involvement of staff

The employees' contribution to safety appears decisive for the effectiveness of the management system. Not only are the staff consulted, but they are also involved in risk assessment. This staff involvement ensures that measures adopted will be pragmatic and appropriate to the workstation concerned.

Numerous safety management support tools

A whole set of tools and indicators have been developed relating to safety management.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

This initiative is transferable to other companies and other activities. It requires management involvement and the employees' commitment to the success of the SMS.

3. References, resources:

- http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/mainstreaming_osh_business