



THE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN A WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRE AT SITA SUD

1. Organisations involved

SITA France

2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

The processing centre of La Penne sur Huveaune, on the outskirts of Marseilles, is one of the main facilities of SITA France, an environment services company of Suez Group, a world leader in water and waste services. The processing centre in question handles all waste management activities: selective collection (glass, cardboard, etc.), industrial collection (non-hazardous but also hazardous industrial wastes, waste from healthcare operations, etc.), household waste collection, transport, sorting and treatment. It employs about 60 workers, handling operators, machine operators (including about 30 drivers) and team leaders, 10 office workers and 10 executives.

The Penne sur Huveaune processing centre was a candidate for MASE certification in 2004.

The MASE corporate safety assurance manual is a reference system for safety management that was developed by a federation of chemical firms and defines the minimum measures required for a company to be able to establish an efficient OSH management system. The reference system consists of two main parts, which provide the company with all the information required to set up or improve its safety management system. The first part describes in detail the five factors that form the essential foundations of the system:

- management commitment;
- the competence and occupational qualification of the personnel;
- work preparation and organisation;
- inspections; and
- continual improvement.

The second part of the manual comprises a set of technical appendices containing advice and serving as a decision-making aid for the company.

Waste management is one of the most dangerous sectors, with regular fatal injuries and frequency and severity levels which are nearly double the average injury rates in other activities. As a European leader in its field and a member of SUEZ Group, which signed an ethical charter in 1998, SITA has committed itself to achieving an exemplary record with regard to safety.

2.2. Aims

The goal of achieving MASE certification results from a twofold concern for safety, both general and local, in a context of critical statistics.

The Penne sur Huveaune processing centre's application for MASE certification also represented a local challenge. The aim for this centre is first to meet the company's objectives by overcoming the high accident rate. As an operating manager at the centre commented, 'the goal is to acquire a safety-related work method'.

It was also a commercial opportunity to expand the business, since the MASE label is necessary for the centre to be able to obtain access to certain markets (customers or invitations to tender for industrial wastes).



2.3. What was done, and how?

Application to the Penne sur Huveaune processing centre

In 2000 SITA France set in motion an Environment Quality Safety (EQS) programme, and an EQS charter was established in 2001. This EQS policy provided a framework for quality, safety and environmental measures that had in fact been established for several years in some subsidiaries.

To develop its policy, in 2002 SITA France worked out an Integrated Management System (IMS) for use by the head office and the subsidiaries 'to assure customers that every task is approached from three angles simultaneously: environment, quality and safety' (P. Dauvin, CEO of SITA France, 2001).

Each regional Technical Department of the group has local correspondents for the Integrated Management System: Quality Manager, Safety Coordinator, Safety Instructor, environmental managers, etc. The Technical Department is heavily involved in working out the safety management system for the centre and the safety assurance manual, as required by the MASE reference system.

Application of the management system to the processing centre and conformity to the MASE required a great deal of work on the part of the regional safety coordinator as well as the operating manager.

Before applying the MASE reference system, the manager of the centre reorganised operations. This was carried out in several stages:

In 2001, work was performed to improve the equipment and bring the facility into conformity, especially from an environmental and organisational viewpoint.

In 2002 a document was drawn up initiating the work on risk assessment which continues today.

In 2002 and 2003, efforts were made to raise awareness of safety, both through regulations and quality procedures, but also via training, especially for the supervisory staff.

In 2003, emphasis was placed on implementation of the MASE reference system:

- writing of the manual;
- fulfilment of certain requirements;
- pre-audit;
- adoption of new initiatives ('safety talks' at the start of the quarterly team meeting, establishment of annual evaluation of all the personnel, etc.).

These talks were conducted chiefly by the operations manager, who called on the safety coordinator to provide support for dissemination of his safety messages. But in the future, the operations manager will pass on this task to the operators (supervisory staff) themselves.

Support provided by SITA head office

The major measures taken by the SITA head office for safety management are:

The provision of human resources: SITA France has provided the operators with a regional safety coordinator and safety instructor. The role of the regional coordinator is to 'promote risk prevention and the improvement of working conditions' in all the agencies in the region. The instructor, for his part, trains relay instructors to provide training for the personnel: handling operators, drivers, etc.

The provision of material resources: SITA has provided IT resources, in particular the organisation of the Integrated Management System (IMS) on the Intranet, which thus serves as a safety management database. In addition to the IMS, the 'CLEAR' computerised invoicing tool helped structure the operators' work; it requires data management relating to vehicles, loads, collection and dumping locations, working hours, etc. which provides a framework for

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rounds and management operations but also work traceability, which is a new requirement for these normally autonomous teams.

The elaboration of a safety assurance manual: A 17-page document produced to meet MASE requirements covers the measures taken to manage the safety policy. This document, dedicated to safety, is organised in accordance with the five chapters of the MASE (management commitment, skills and qualifications, work preparation and organisation, evaluation and measurement of results, and constant monitoring and commitment). It refers to various procedures of the IMS: management, human resources, surveillance and measurement, etc. and is illustrated by excerpts from SITA internal documents. Updated, measurable objectives: The health and safety policy and the commitment to it is summarised in a detailed list of objectives, revised annually and set for each agency and centre of SITA Sud.

2.4. What was achieved?

The safety management system benefited from an industry context favourable to making allowances for safety considerations, in view of the dangers of the waste collection industry which have resulted in serious injuries and even deaths.

There is growing sector awareness of the risks involved in waste management operations, combined with a more general heightened awareness of road safety in the company. The statutory obligations are therefore better accepted.

Safety management received attention at the highest level of the firm.

The stated objectives, the resources assigned and the repeated attention to safety make it one of the prime concerns of personnel and management. Everyone supports this policy in a united fashion. Action is taken to solve the problems that arise.

Extensive training is offered to maintain and develop skills in the area of safety.

The fact that management has adopted the project and continues to regard safety as a strategic issue means that safety practices have become permanently established.

The measures that have most impact on staff safety awareness include:

- Computerised scheduling of rounds with CLEAR;
- The 'safety talks'; collective meetings for safety discussions between the personnel and senior management;
- The 'truck manual' which, for the personnel involved, brings together the administrative documents for each truck, the safety protocols for customers' facilities and the SITA rules of good conduct;
- The follow-up provided by quality-safety assessments and accident analyses;
- Induction with the safety booklet, a collection of safety and risk prevention instructions, illustrated with drawings or pictograms, published by SITA France.

The visible results are as follows:

- The frequency level of accidents in the agency, which was around 100 between 2000 and 2001, fell to about 50 in 2002.
- The La Penne centre which, in 2001 and 2002, accounted for almost three-quarters of the agency's accidents, accounted for 'only' 50% in 2003.
- In 2002 the centre accounted for 10% of the number of workdays lost by SITA Sud; accidents were still numerous but less serious than before.

From the qualitative viewpoint, the results observed are as follows:

- An improvement in working conditions: The safety investments made by SITA are giving good results. The staff unanimously recognised the change in the facilities, material, equipment, etc.

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- A feeling of belonging to a leading firm: The safety policy promoted by SITA (requirements, resources, etc.) reassures staff and reinforces the image of the company as being concerned about safety.
- Giving responsibility to staff, especially the supervisory staff: The measures taken and the information provided on safety give the staff a sense of responsibility in this matter. Safety is presented as an expression of professionalism.

Problems faced

Despite this growing awareness of safety, attitudes to risks vary greatly from one person to another, and there is a difference in perception between the labour force and senior management.

For management, the main risks concern traffic and the operation of the machinery and equipment for which it is responsible.

For the supervisory staff, the main risks concern their teams: the major risks, in their view, are risks of falling related to net laying or risks of injury when opening the doors of the bins or during travel.

For the drivers, the risks are above all to the safety of others (passers-by, customers) or the possibility of damaging private or public property (cars, etc.) if the net fails or if a bin falls. They do not express much concern for their own safety and the risks that they personally face. At most they speak of certain difficult situations, risks from electric cables, or certain handling operations. This disregard for personal risk is well known and common in situations of danger, but this hierarchy of risks shows that the drivers' safety in a given situation will depend on constant compromises between various priorities.

Numerous areas for improvement remain, however, as shown by the quality-safety assessments and the EQS inspections, for example:

- Breaches of the regulations or obligations (for example: using the phone when driving, cigarettes on hazardous sites, etc.);
- Wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) highly variable in all operations;
- Postures contrary to health and safety recommendations;
- Shortcomings regarding compliance with certain instructions: inadequate noticeboards on site or inadequate circulation of emergency evacuation instructions, brief and incomplete accident analysis reports, etc.

These shortcomings are mostly being dealt with by analyses and corrective measures. While safety takes high priority in SITA's policy, it can nevertheless be further reinforced in operating practices.

The policies apply above all to safety. While priority has been given to injuries in the safety policies of the IMS, it is likely that health may prove – as much as safety – a major issue for SITA's agencies over the coming years for all types of personnel.

2.5. Success factors

Passing on a sense of responsibility to the staff is clearly a factor in the success of this initiative, leading the workers to feel a greater commitment to health and safety matters.

Management supported the establishment of this safety management system (MASE) with training, documentation and material resources that enabled safety practices to become established permanently; the radical change in the attitude of the staff is significant.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

This initiative is transferable to other industries. It requires strong management involvement to work out the strategy and the management system, but also a will to involve all the workers so that they feel a sense of ownership of the system.

3. References, resources:

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