

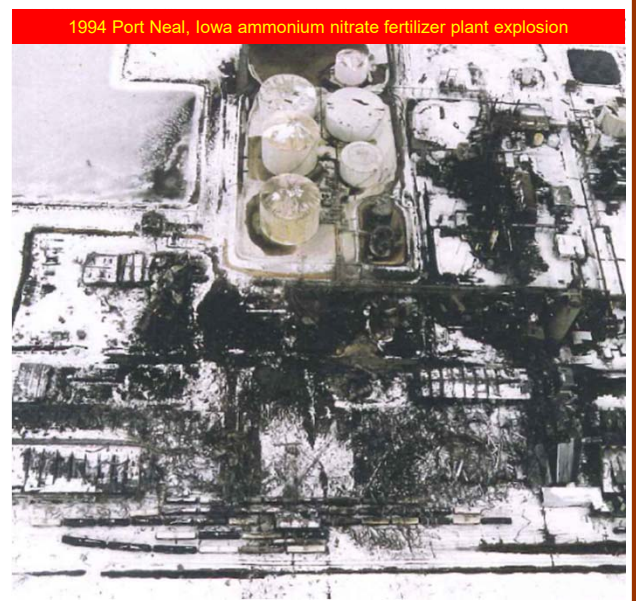
Haste Makes Waste!

September 2017



Have you ever needed to put a piece of paper in the trash can, but instead of taking those last 4 steps, you tossed it and missed the can? Then you walk over, pick it up, and throw it out as planned. What was gained? Actually, it took extra effort to go back, pick the trash up, and put it in the trash can. What if you didn't go back? Someone else would have had to do it for you.

The same idea applies to process safety. If you don't do it right the first time, you will have to do it over! Or, somebody else will have to do it over for you. However, some process safety tasks are not as obvious as trash on the floor. Not doing process safety tasks (for example, checking an instrument, following a procedure) correctly the first time can result in grave consequences for you, your co-workers, the community and the environment. When? Where? How? Who knows?



1994 Port Neal, Iowa ammonium nitrate fertilizer plant explosion

Why is it important?

Taking "short cuts" in the plant has been a contributing cause to a number of process safety incidents. For example:

- Failure to follow procedures
- Silencing alarms without taking corrective action
- Failing to make rounds to check the plant status
- Doing a plant procedure without bothering to take the check sheet with you. You may have done this activity hundreds of times, but people are only 99% accurate at best. You are about 10 times more likely to leave out a step in a moderately complicated procedure if you are not using a checklist.

While these may seem to be minor, they can have severe consequences. Improper, inaccurate or poorly used procedures have led to major incidents with many fatalities and injuries. For example, in December, 1994 there was an explosion in a fertilizer plant in Port Neal, Iowa. There were 4 fatalities, 18 injuries, much of the plant was destroyed, and chemical releases had significant environmental impacts. The US EPA investigation team concluded that "the explosion resulted from a lack of written, safe operation procedures" which "resulted in conditions in the plant that were necessary for the explosion to occur."

What about a task that is not easy to do? There may be an instrument reading that requires climbing many flights of stairs, unlocking an enclosure to verify a level, or going to the far end of the plant to check a valve position. It is easy to rationalize skipping this when you are busy. Someone else will get it next time – just like the trash on the floor! But, if everybody behaves the same way, the task will never be done.

What can you do?

- Always follow procedures completely. If procedures are inaccurate or incorrect, explain the problem to your supervisors. They want the activity to be done correctly and safely!
- When making plant inspection rounds, take the time to do it well and thoroughly.
- If there are inspection points that are difficult to access, instruments that are out of calibration or not working, unknown liquids dripping from pipes, agitators that are shaking, pumps that are making strange noises, or anything else that doesn't look or sound right as you go through the plant, note this on the rounds sheet and bring it to your supervisor's attention. Nobody can fix a problem that they don't know about!

If you can't find time to do it right the first time, how will you find time to do it over?