

Reduction in injury a key result

BY ANIKA REYNOLDS

A new workplace program designed to improve employee safety communications has been launched with the premise that empowering workers and customising safety solutions will deliver better results for companies.

MySafe, by cultural research consultancy Factive, is a comprehensive communications program which examines safety communications across a company, rather than on a particular or individual aspect of safety.

It encourages employees to 'pull' their safety communications, rather than to simply passively receive information from safety personnel or managers.

Factive Director Dr Dean Laplonge came up with the concept after seeing a need for improved safety communications handling in the mining sector.

"Through our onsite consulting and academic research, we noticed a gap in how many

resource companies handle safety communications," Dr Laplonge said.

"Sadly we also noticed a lack of awareness of contemporary theories and practices of communication among those involved in safety communications."

Dr Laplonge and his team were able to examine the literature available on safety communications which they analysed alongside the work they had done on safety communications for mining and oil gas companies.

"We then built a program that could introduce the new skills that are required to ensure safety communications can have a real positive impact on employee safety," he said.

The result was a safety program which helps overhaul a company's existing communication system.

"Mysafe introduces new skills which benefit managers and safety professionals to help them better handle safety communications that really matter to them," Dr Laplonge said.

"Essentially it revamps a company's approach to safety communications,



Empowering: MySafe is a new comprehensive safety program that emphasises workplace communication.

so communication about safety can be directly linked to safety outcomes."

When meeting with a new client, the MySafe team first conducts an extensive review of the existing communications practices and skills and then adapts the MySafe program to that particular client.

The next step is to work with managers and safety professionals to teach them to adopt a new safety communications approach in the workplace.

"We then work with safety professionals primarily to implement this in the workspace, while we also work with employees to help them change their practices of safety communications too," Dr Laplonge said.

"Once this is completed, we leave it in the hands of the safety professionals to manage the program

and return a while later to review."

Dr Laplonge said implementing a new program into workplaces did not come without challenges, which sometimes included resistance from management.

"The biggest challenge we face with this kind of program is the willingness of managers and safety personnel to change the way they view and practice safety communications," Dr Laplonge said.

"Workers tend to welcome the program because it gives them more involvement in communicating about safety and it recognises that their interpretations of safety communications are important even if they are not always right or appropriate.

"They are no longer simply being told what to do to stay safe but are able to draw on the information

they need to help them think about what it means to stay safe."

Dr Laplonge said they had seen positive change by clients within the mining sector, particularly in terms of injury reduction.

"We have worked with one large mining company where the management jumped on board with new approaches to safety," he said.

"This allowed us to help implement a complete overhaul of their safety communications being asked in every safety meeting.

"We started hearing managers asking for advice on how to communicate a safety initiative in a way which would include the employees and we saw a 50 per cent reduction in workplace injuries."

Turnkey packages to make tests both safer and cheaper

A new collection of in-line weld testing and isolation packages has been developed in order to increase safety when undertaking hot work activities onsite.

International engineering company Hydratight has developed the products in a bid to enhance safety and substantially cut overall project costs compared to alternative methods such as using blinded flanges, full system pressurisation or mechanical tools.

The turnkey testing packages, available throughout Australasia and the Asia-Pacific, work by limiting the test area to only to new welds or welded components tested during routine maintenance and maintenance shutdowns.

This localised pressure testing is designed to reduce system downtime during maintenance and increase worksite safety by minimising pressure test volumes.

"Because of their hydraulic design, the weld testing tool employed can be installed in matter of minutes, compared to hours using conventional tools," a Hydratight spokesperson said.

"Because of their innovative design, overall project cost can be cut down to 25 per cent of the cost of using blinded flanges, full system pressurisation or mechanical tools.

"The technique also cuts down the risk of creating unwanted leakages in mature systems.

"The robust construction of the tool ensures safe and prolonged use in the harshest environments."

Localised pressure testing is a means of verifying the integrity of a welded or formed joint or flange installation or weld which has been made on a piping system.

The company said typically these were made as a repair or modification of part of a

process piping system which was undertaken during plant shutdown activities.

"Hydratight provides certified and experienced technicians to perform the job safely and provides operators a full turnkey testing package, delivering a first-class maintenance solution for facility assets," the spokesperson said.

"Hydratight's qualified and professional technicians provide a safe, reliable and cost-effective means for the localised pressure testing of piping."

Technicians insert the weld test tool into the pipe or equipment component to provide a fast and efficient method of verifying the integrity of butt welds, joints or other welded pipe components.

Featuring double block and bleed isolation, these tools provide a verified vapour barrier allowing hot work activities to take place safely onsite once set in position.

To test the weld, the same tool is repositioned over the weld area.

The weld test is typically undertaken using water as the test medium, but can be undertaken using inert gas where necessary.

The test is normally a strength test of the joint at 1.5 times the design pressure, but can also be used as a leak testing means, typically undertaken at 1.1 times the design pressure.

The company offers a broad range of test tools and as well as steel tools, Hydratight carries an extensive range of lightweight aluminium tools designed for light, fast and flexible use.

Hydratight provides a range of specialist products and services to the oil and gas and power generation industries.

The company's aim is to maximise safety and improve operational efficiency.