

“Be afraid...” - HSE Chair warns the energy industry

‘Never allow short-term business pressures to blind you to the real and potentially devastating human and business consequences of neglecting process safety and asset integrity’, is the warning the Chair of the Health and Safety Executive gave to an international audience of oil and gas experts.

Judith Hackitt, a chemical engineer, with more than 25 years’ experience in industry, spoke about the importance of properly maintaining ageing on and offshore facilities, at an Energy Institute seminar during the International Petroleum Week conference in London.

Drawing on the lessons learned from numerous catastrophes, including the explosion at the BP Texas City refinery in 2005, Judith raised the importance asset integrity and process safety leadership across all sub-sectors of the energy industry. She emphasized that the problems are similar and that solutions should be shared across the whole industry.

Judith Hackitt said:

“If there is one thing we should have learned from Flixborough, Bhopal, Piper Alpha, Buncefield and Texas City, it is that lack of injuries and near misses is no

guide whatsoever that all is well in process safety terms. Indicators which point to the absence of a problem - so far - say absolutely nothing about what might be about to happen.

“Short-term business pressures drove BP to cut capital expenditure at its Texas City plant by deferring projects and failing to monitor the subsequent impact of this. This had a dramatic impact on the repair and maintenance program at the site and was a significant factor in the catastrophic explosion in 2005.

“Asset integrity is not simply about securing profitability and operational continuity. This is serious stuff. When we cease to be afraid of the potential for human suffering and devastating business consequences of a major incident in any of the industries represented here today, we lose sight of why it really is so important that we take this matter seriously.”



Matrix awarded contract for Utilities HSE Case by Agip KCO Operations in Kazakhstan

Following on from the successful completion of the Power Generation Package (PGP) HSE Case, Matrix Management Systems, the software solutions provider specializing in management systems, and active (electronic) safety cases has announced that it has been awarded a further contract for the preparation of the Utilities HSE Case by AGIP KCO Operations in Kazakhstan.

Under the terms of the 8 month contract Matrix is to prepare the safety case itself and make it available in a simple,

easy to understand and graphical way to the workforce using its MAT-Nav Active Safety Case software. The contract will also encompass support, maintenance and the future management of the system.

Wilf Luck, Managing Director of Matrix said, “It’s always reassuring when an existing client awards us further work. Especially, when it’s for a “Blue-Chip” company like AGIP and for one of the largest and most challenging processing facilities in the world”. It shows we must be doing something right!

Ras Laffan tour: No compromise on safety

The first thing that strikes any visitor who enters the Qatargas facilities in the industrial city of Ras Laffan, 80kms north east of Doha is the strict safety measures that surround each such tours.

In one such typical field visit recently organized by Qatargas to its Laffan Refinery and Trains 4 and 5 for a delegation of local and international media, we had a first-hand impression of the strict safety regulations to observe and the instructions to follow.

In fact, the very first entry in our program was a safety briefing that included the ‘do’s’ such as seat belt at all time while on the bus and several ‘don’ts’ such as carrying lighters and matches among others.

Since our tour included a walk through the plant accompanied by our hosts, Hamad Al Humadi, Onshore Operations Manager and Jacques Letessier, Refinery Asset Manager, both from Qatargas we had also to wear the Personal Protective Equipment, commonly known as PPE: coveralls, hard hat, ear plugs...

Letessier leading the way, we started-off our tour with the Qatargas operated Ras Laffan condensate refinery, the first condensate refinery in Qatar, which is to be formally inaugurated soon.

Production of the refinery, which has a total processing capacity of 146,000 barrels per stream day (BPSD), reached commercial quantities and specifications on September 23 last year for all products.

The new refinery consists of process units including utility systems, distillation units, naphtha and kerosene hydro-treaters, a hydrogen unit and a saturated gas plant and will produce naphtha, kerojet, gasoil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

The refinery’s production capacity will be 61,000 bpsd of naphtha, 52,000 bpsd of kerojet, 24,000 bpsd of gasoil and 9,000 bpsd of LPG.

Here the media team was introduced to a variety of processes at the Unit 16 Kero hydro treating and Unit 17 Steam Methane Reformer as well as the Unit 12 Condensate Distillation.

The Laffan Refinery was built in line with the national strategy of Qatar aiming to add value to the condensate produced from the Qatargas and RasGas facilities.

And this facility has been designed as an environmentally friendly and built in line with stringent environment standards, especially a waste water treatment system which enables reuse of treated water in various operation of the refinery.

The trip, on the afternoon took the media group, accompanied by Hamad Al Humadi to the massive Trains 4 and 5, where journal-

ists were able to see the state-of-the-art control room of the facilities in action as well as the intricacy of the QG2 utility, Train 4 Amine Unit, the liquefaction Unit, gas turbines and the Train 5 with similar units.

Qatargas Trains 4 and 5 are huge complexes in Ras Laffan Industrial City. Qatargas-2 Train 4 is owned by Qatar Petroleum (70 percent) and ExxonMobil (30 percent), while Qatargas-2 Train 5 is owned by Qatar Petroleum (65 percent), ExxonMobil (18.3 percent) and Total (16.7 percent). It boasts the best specialists, the best equipment, and the most advanced technology, the result of many years’ work.

Qatargas-2 links natural gas production, liquefaction, shipping, and regasification infrastructure into a single fully integrated LNG development and supply initiative. In addition to Trains 4 and 5, the Qatargas-2 joint venture encompasses a fleet of Q-Max and Q-Flex carriers and the newly commissioned South Hook Terminal in Milford Haven, Wales.

Last year Qatargas successfully started production from its latest 7.8 million tones per annum (mtpa) LNG mega trains, each approximately 50 percent larger than any other global liquefaction facility currently operating outside of Qatar. Train 4 started production in May, followed in September by Train 5, raising the Company’s production capacity to nearly 26 mtpa. Qatargas’ total LNG production is expected to increase to 42 mtpa when two more 7.8 mtpa trains currently under construction, begin production this year.

The production process of liquefied natural gas (LNG) starts with natural gas, being transported to the LNG Plant site as feedstock. After filtration and metering in the feedstock reception facility, the feedstock gas enters the LNG plant and is distributed among the identical liquefaction systems.

Natural gas liquefaction plants designs are in general based on the combination of heat exchange and refrigeration. The LNG is produced in these massive liquefaction plants by cooling natural gas to a temperature of minus 260 degrees F (minus 161 Celsius). At this temperature, natural gas becomes liquid and its volume reduces 600 times. An odorless, colorless, non-corrosive and non-toxic liquid, LNG is stored and transported at a slightly above atmospheric pressure.

Qatar is on track to start up two giant new liquefied natural gas facilities this year that will complete capacity expansion plans in what is already the world’s largest LNG exporter. The country aims to boost LNG capacity to 77 million tones per year (tpy) by the end of this year.

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