

February Members' Corner

I Prevented an Accident

Doug Hunter, G.F.Tomlinson



Doug Hunter

fundamental issues.

Doug presented us with his company's initiative aimed at controlling workplace hazards, which goes by the eye-catching slogan of "I Prevented an Accident (IPA)"! He described it as not revolutionary but appealingly simple, which immediately grabbed the audience's attention!

It was developed, Doug added, because the standard approach to accident monitoring was not exactly helpful as most companies, thankfully, experienced too few accidents to establish conventional trend analyses. Doug commented that many companies used 'Near Miss' initiatives to attack basic accident causations and whilst this was quite logical, Tomlinson's wanted to take a step backwards to get a fresh look at the

Their philosophy is based on the well-known definitions: -

- An accident is an incident that has given rise to injury, ill-health or a fatality.
- By contrast, a Near Miss is an incident where no injury, ill-health or fatality occurred, although the causes may have been almost identical.
- An IPA is the written identification of an unsafe act or unsafe condition that has not yet resulted in an incident or accident.

The IPA system is aimed primarily at Managers who are tasked with submitting **two reports per month** on acts or conditions that they have discovered. Initially, some managers objected to doing this because they considered it to be part of their job to eliminate such problems. Although the company agreed with this, Doug commented, the IPA system was necessary because they wanted hard evidence about what was happening so that positive remedies could be put in place! In addition, the reporter had to take the action and this again provided more information on practical solutions to current problems.

Reports are reviewed by H S & E Advisor, Divisional Manager, Contracts Manager and Director responsible for Safety. The data are typical of the detailed analysis that has been made in this system: -

- Categories i.e. work at height, PPE, excavations, housekeeping, work equipment
- Specific Sites (Managers)
- Specific Companies (sub-contractors)
- Specific Trades
- Specific Individuals
- Time of year / week / day
- Weather conditions

Regarding the data obtained from the reports, Doug said that trends for Roofer, Electricians and Carpenters were just some of the categories provided. It was apparent that Mechanical and Electrical trades were the worst offenders and that safety-critical operations were the best controlled. It was also possible to obtain data about specific persons and Doug added that it was noticeable that there was a seasonal variation, with more IPAs in the winter months.

Doug showed us a few photographs of typical IPA scenarios!



Work at Height



Access / Egress



Unsafe System of Work



Beam Me Down, Scottie!



Open Excavation



Trip Hazard

In addition to these **Unsafe Conditions** that were spotted, Doug added, these **Unsafe Acts** that were also observed: -

- Uncontrolled movement of plant i.e. no use of Banksman.
- Bombing scaffold from high level
- Incorrect manual handling
- Failing to use correct PPE
- Unauthorised access i.e. climbing scaffold

Doug concluded that the six years of operation of the IPA had created a very welcome 'Hazard Spotting' culture within the company and it yielded something like the following results: -

- | | |
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| • IPAs submitted per month | 60 – 100 |
| • Accidents recorded per month | 1.6 |
| • IPAs submitted per year approx | 1000 |
| • Accidents recorded per year | 19 |

Paul Cartwright of Carillion asked if Tomlinson operated an award scheme with the IPA initiative and Doug replied that they did. **Gerry Mulholland** commented that he knew of a 'Gang Award' Scheme that encouraged team working and avoided personal conflicts of interest.

(Secretary's Note: Some years ago, the Midlands Electricity Utility operated a Managing Director's Safety Performance Scheme that awarded cash on a divisional basis, covering many trades and professions. The novel approach of this scheme was that the cash had to be given to a local Registered Charity within the Division's geographical boundary. This motivated a very large group pulling together with a common aim, without any monetary personal gain, whilst at the same time giving them a worthwhile cause to support. It also boosted the company profile in the community and was a truly 'Win-Win' situation all round!)

The audience took part in a lively discussion and the Chairman eventually had to call a halt in order to leave enough time for our main speaker. It was obvious that the simplicity and effectiveness of the IPA approach had struck a chord with the members and Gerry thanked Doug for a very thought-provoking presentation.