

Ezra Franklin

2/25/2022

USW 12-591 Fallen Worker's Scholarship Response

Each occupation comes with a certain amount of risk. Some professions, such as architects and dentists, have a relatively small chance of injury and death. More dangerous professions, like construction and iron fabrication, incur far greater risks. As a result, America has adopted a set of standards that dictate appropriate workplace safety measures. These rules have been instrumental in lowering death and injury rates in dangerous jobs.

Sadly, America has not always prioritized safety. In the early 1900s, there was very little regulation regarding the protection of workers. The earliest complete survey, in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, revealed that "from July 1906 through June 1907...in the one county, 526 workers died in 'work accidents', 195 of these were steelworkers" ("Achievements in Public Health").

During the late 1900s, Americans began to realize the need for workplace safety reform. Unions, journalists, and several lawmakers were instrumental in passing the Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act. The act led to the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In order to reduce injury and death rates, OSHA created the "Process Safety Management of Highly Hazardous Chemicals standard" (PSM). PSM contains fourteen essential elements that help keep workers safe when dealing with hazardous chemicals.

While all fourteen elements of PSM are an integral part of a safe workplace, one of the most important parts of PSM is the management of change (MOC). According to

the PSM standard “The employer shall establish and implement written procedures to manage changes... to process chemicals, technology, equipment, and procedures” (“Process Safety Management”). Industries in America are constantly changing. Equipment design, operating procedures, and maintenance requirements often adapt to make work more efficient. As these things change, so must the safety procedures that accompany them. The MOC portion of PSM requires the company to analyze their changes and the impact they will have on workplace safety. The company must develop a plan that details the timeline and nature of the changes. Additionally, the workforce must be “informed of, and trained in, the change prior to start-up of the process” (“Process Safety Management”). When this aspect of PSM is followed, workers can face change with confidence. On the other hand, failing to properly manage change increases the risk of catastrophic failure. When change is unplanned, any number of things can go wrong, causing injury and even death. It is essential that companies take management of change, and PSM in general, very seriously.

As a result of PSM and other related standards, death rates have steadily declined. “In 1997, 17 steelworker fatalities occurred nationwide.” (“Achievements in Public Health”). When compared with the 195 steelworker deaths in Allegheny County, the difference is apparent.

Overall, workplace safety is an important subject. Over the years, unions, legislators, and employers have made great steps in this area. OSHA, and the standards such as PSM, have been instrumental in keeping workers safe and giving their families peace of mind.

Works Cited

"1910.119 - Process Safety Management of Highly Hazardous Chemicals. | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." *Home | Occupational Safety and Health Administration*, OSHA, <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.119>.

"About OSHA | Occupational Safety and Health Administration." *Home | Occupational Safety and Health Administration*, <https://www.osha.gov/aboutosha>.

"Achievements in Public Health, 1900-1999: Improvements in Workplace Safety -- United States, 1900-1999." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4822a1.htm>.

History of Workplace Safety in the United States, 1880-1970.
<https://eh.net/encyclopedia/history-of-workplace-safety-in-the-united-states-1880-1970/>.

"Management of Change (MOC): Strategies for Compliance." *VelocityEHS*, 30 Aug. 2021, <https://www.ehs.com/2017/11/management-change-moc-strategies-compliance/>.

"The Job Safety Law of 1970: Its Passage Was Perilous | U.S. Department of Labor." *Home | U.S. Department of Labor*, <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/osha>.