Preventative Maintenance

A maintenance process ensures the inspection, testing and maintenance of operational and safety critical equipment is undertaken and it is a vital barrier to control risk, especially in a major hazard site that is so reliant on mechanical, electrical and electronic systems working effectively. The lack of an effective maintenance regime is a common contributory cause of many major accident scenarios and the lack of such a system provides a useful indicator as to the real commitment of top management to safety. There were multiple failures at Buncefield relating to maintenance.

what was set out in the document and the safety management systems did not reflect what actually went on at the site. For example, a critical parts list was required for maintenance and was stated to have been critically reviewed as a result of risk assessment. In reality the list was put together without any fundamental rationale.

In addition, failures to maintain bunds which were;

not subject to an adequate inspection and maintenance regime.

the designers, manufacturers, installers and those involved in maintenance did not have an adequate knowledge of the environment in which the [safety critical] equipment was to be used.

One of the more unusual aspects of the report was the finding relating to a red emergency stop button that was part of the operator display in the control room which was designed to close all of the side valves on the tanks. What supervisors did not know was that this stop function was not working - because it had never been installed.

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