



Interoffice Communication

To VCM Plant Employees
From J. A. DeBernardi
Date September 7, 1977
Subject Advisory Committee Meeting - June 28, 1977

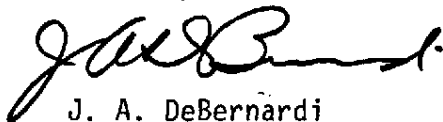
The completion of the July plant turnaround marked another record-breaking performance in the safety area. A total of 12 injuries were recorded during the turnaround, breaking the previous low record of 14 injuries which occurred in the February, 1976 turnaround. This new turnaround record was due to the safety awareness and efforts put forth by each of our permanent plant employees and its positive affect on the casualls we had in the plant during the turnaround. Congratulations on a very commendable effort.

Business outlook over the remainder of the year is unfortunately giving indications of slowing down. Business indicators are showing softness in the nation's economy. This same softness is being seen in the PVC market area which, of course, reflects itself back to our plant in reduction of VCM demand. International opportunities are presently being explored by our Business Area people as a possible hedge against predicted domestic VCM demand drop-off.

Site preparation work for the new vent incinerator project will begin in September. Some equipment for this project has already begun to be received at the plant. Project meetings I recently attended continue to predict mechanical completion of the incinerator project will occur about mid-July, 1978. As you are already aware (article in the CONOCO Chemicals News), a project to install a standby incineration system was approved in July. This standby unit was considered necessary to assure plant stream factor while being in full compliance with the EPA's VCM Emission Standard published in October, 1976.

Related to this EPA Standard, the agency published a proposed revised standard in June that if adopted carries serious implications as to whether we will be able to build another VCM plant at this site in the future. Although our location is still in the running for a new plant at this time, the cloud the proposed standard puts on this decision has damaged our position.

Attached you will find comments related to questions asked at the June 28 Advisory Committee meeting.



J. A. DeBernardi

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Distribution
Bulletin Boards
Supervisors

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

JUNE 28, 1977

Employees Attending:

D. Derouen
E. Spencer
K. Vincent

H. Monticello
J. Brunson
G. Ben

- 1) What is the plant's policy related to employees or relatives of employees bidding on contracts for work done within the plant?

Comment

It is not plant policy to allow employees or their close relatives to bid on contracts for work under the control of the VCM Plant. This, of course, does not mean that these people cannot bid on work offered by other CONOCO locations in the Lake Charles area. Also, common sense would indicate that if an employee or close relative were the only person available with the equipment or expertise necessary to do the required work in our plant, this policy might occasionally be violated. However, such a situation is highly improbable in our area because of its industrialized base and proximity to the Houston, Beaumont, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans areas.

- 2) Salaried people on the field payroll are docked pay for late arrival on the job. This shouldn't be the case since all plant employees are salaried.

Comment

All plant employees are on a salaried basis. The salaried payroll is broken down into two areas--office payroll which includes all supervisors, office, warehouse, and laboratory personnel, and field payroll which includes all Maintenance and Operations departments' personnel. Each of these salaried payrolls are further broken down into exempt status and non-exempt status. Exempt status includes employees who are not paid for overtime worked, non-exempt status includes employees who are paid for overtime worked.

All employees, on either the office or field payroll, who enjoy non-exempt status are subject to pay deduction for late arrival on the job as well as additional pay for hours worked in excess of a normal workday. There are many reasons why promptness on the part of all employees in reporting for work is necessary if we are to operate a safe and efficient plant. Those employees who violate this principle should expect to be docked pay. Continuous violators can also expect to be counseled related to tardiness, and disciplined further should the habit not be broken.

- 3) Why are some employees docked for being late to work and others are not?

Comment

It is my intent that policies and procedures within the VCM Plant be administered fairly and consistently among all employees. Oversights or honest mistakes may occur from time to time, however, intentional favoritism will not be tolerated in our plant as normal or standard procedure.

- 4) Why weren't people on vacation or with legitimate excuses that did not attend the Safety Banquet allowed a "make-up" dinner?

Comment

"Make-up" dinners related to the June 24 Safety Banquet were allowed for those employees who were unable to attend because of work requirements. This included those scheduled on shift, those working overtime, or called out to handle plant problems. Excuses other than this were considered to be in the control of the affected employee and, therefore, "make-up" dinners were not allowed.

- 5) Why aren't office payroll employees allowed to bid on field payroll openings or other office payroll openings?

Comment

It is plant policy that office payroll openings are filled by the most qualified person that can be found to handle the responsibilities of the position open. Our search to fill such an opening includes our existing plant personnel--both office and field, other Chemicals division personnel, and outside company sources. Bidding by either office or field payroll employees is not considered an acceptable alternate for filling an office payroll opening.

Procedures for filling of field payroll openings are listed in the plant Policy Guide, and have been very effective in continuing the safe and efficient operation of our plant. Again, the existing procedures make it possible for office payroll people to move into the field payroll, however, not by bidding. Movements which are made in the field payroll situations normally result in one or more entrance level job openings. Filling of this entrance level position is normally done by new-hire from outside the plant. However, office payroll personnel will be considered as candidates for the entrance job opening if their desires are known at the time the search for a new employee is underway.

We are just as interested in filling the field payroll entrance opening with the best qualified person we can hire as we are related to an office payroll opening. Equal consideration is given to existing employees desiring it, as is given to outside applicants for the opening. The best qualified person will be hired to fill the opening.

- 6) Why aren't laborers hired to do laborer work within the plant rather than using craftsmen?

Comment

The stability and efficiency of our plant Maintenance Department is maintained by the ability of our people to do whatever work is required in a safe manner. Although our Maintenance Department people are trained and skilled in a particular craft area, their flexibility in use in other areas when needed adds to department efficiency. The ability to do this also allows employment stability to these employees. Without such flexibility a lack of work in one craft skill could result in lay-off of affected employees, rather than use in an area of work that needs extra people and thereby uninterrupted employment.

- 7) Should contractors working within the plant be allowed to use plant tools and equipment when it results in a hold-up in the normal maintenance schedule for the day?

Comment

Contractors working within our plant are normally required to furnish all the equipment necessary to complete their job as part of their contractual agreement. Some exceptions to this statement are allowed; however, these exceptions are known and agreed upon also as part of the contractual agreement. Some give and take is required in this area as a job progresses, however, a give that affects the efficiency of our in-plant maintenance efforts cannot be allowed.

- 8) It was reported that there is a problem with the Maintenance change room air conditioning unit. Is a new unit going to be ordered to replace the existing one?

Comment

Investigation of this problem has indicated it to be related to the adjustment of the system dampers being changed and the doors to the change room being left open so that recirculated refrigerated air was being blown into the Maintenance shop area. The damper setting and door problems have been solved and the unit is now performing adequately. No additional air conditioning units or replacements are being planned at this time for the change room area.

- 9) How many plants in our area celebrate 11 holidays per year?

Comment

In the immediate Lake Charles area no plant celebrates more than 10 holidays. Of the 125 plants in the general Gulf Coast area with which we normally communicate, we find four locations which allow 11 company paid holidays. Of these same 125 locations, six continue to allow only nine paid holidays for employees.

- 10) Can a change be made in the vacation policy in the Instrument Department to allow more than one person off on vacation at the same time? The restrictions placed on Leadmen's vacation relative to Supervisor's vacation in Jim Holcomb's letter of 2-6-74 further restricts vacation scheduling in prime time. Can this be reviewed? Is vacation scheduling and Supervisor/Leadman restrictions handled the same in the Mechanical Section?

Comment

Vacation scheduling policies for all plant departments are contained in Section 6-6 of the Plant Policy Guide. These policies have been developed to allow a maximum of vacation scheduling flexibility to our employees that is consistent with the number of weeks of earned vacation and recognizing the needs of efficient and safe plant staffing requirements. Our policies are competitive with area and industry trends, and in some regards exceed the policies of other plants. You can be assured that this competitiveness will be maintained in the future. At this time I can find no reason to consider a change in our policies related to instrument section employees.

The Supervisor/Leadman restrictions contained in Jim Holcomb's letter of 2-6-74 are considered necessary to provide that an efficient pool of lead and supervisory employees are available to assure plant operability and safety at all times. A review of vacation schedules indicates that since 1974 supervisory personnel in the Maintenance Department have taken a total of six weeks of vacation during the prime time vacation scheduling periods. I do not believe this is placing any significant burden or presenting "prime time" conflicts on vacation scheduling for any of our employees. Therefore, no changes are anticipated in this area at this time.

In my opinion the vacation scheduling policy and Supervisory/Leadman restrictions are being consistently handled in all departments of our plant.

- 11) Operations Department employees appear to be doing a lot of Instrument Department work on off-shifts. Is this a safe situation?

Comment

It is plant policy that minor maintenance work can and should be accomplished by Operations Department employees in both on and off-shift situations. It is a highly inefficient use of skilled manpower to write a work order to tighten packing on a leaking valve, or clean a recorder pen, or reset a displacer level instrument to a new level setting. On the other hand I do consider it unsafe to allow unskilled people to perform tasks that would require disassembly of equipment, or put them in contact with hazardous situations such as electrical shocks, etc. As each situation presents itself, the supervisor must make a judgment as to safety matters and skill levels required and proceed accordingly.

- 12) Is it safe for Operators or Supervisors to trip in main breakers when they trip out?

Comment

The question of safety related to reactivating a tripped out main breaker was again reviewed. From a personnel protection standpoint it is generally agreed that if the door to the breaker box is in place and properly fastened closed any danger from the flash burn or being struck by an internal breaker part is essentially eliminated. Damage to the breaker can occur, however, if the system is shorted out. The potential of damage to the motor also exists in a shorted or partially shorted condition.

It is the plant's policy that when a main breaker trips out, Electrical Department personnel should be contacted to determine why the trip occurred. This does not apply to a trip out of the normal thermal overload system (heaters) which does not trip out the main breaker. In the case of a heater trip-out, resetting of the heaters by personnel other than Electricians is acceptable.