

THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY MOVEMENT

4 In small units, statistical measures of performance are unreliable, so that it is difficult to produce clear-cut evidence as to the effectiveness of accident prevention work. In other words, a small plant may have, by luck, a good or bad accident record over a few years, whether or not its safety program is sound.

These are obstacles to progress, real and serious ones. They are not, of course, excuses for failure to try to prevent accidents. The association approach offers some real hope for improvement.

Meanwhile, some smaller plants have demonstrated over a large number of years that small plants can carry on effective safety programs.

Labor-management cooperation

At top levels, and in some cases at grass roots, progress has been made in enlisting the support of organized labor in management's campaign to reduce accident losses.

In 1949, the National Safety Council issued a policy statement declaring the common interest of labor and management in accident prevention. Even before this date, representatives of leading labor organizations served as members of the Council's governing boards. At a number of National Safety Congresses, reports were made by labor and management men on specific examples of local and companywide cooperation between unions and corporations. In 1955, a Labor Division and a Labor Conference were formally established to function within the framework of the National Safety Council.

Labor has been represented at the various presidential and gubernatorial industrial safety conferences.

Some unions have independently done extensive safety work and have published printed matter and released films which were real contributions to safety.

Continued and expanded efforts to bring unions and managements together should be fruitful, since labor and management have a mutual interest in accident prevention.

While the slow educational process is underway, individual concerns, industries, and unions will have to make their own independent judgments on the wisdom of specific steps toward cooperation.

It is the hope of the great majority of farsighted safety men in both labor and management that every opportunity for cooperation will be pressed to the fullest extent consistent with practical realities.

Research

Statistical data on industrial accidents have been compiled by the National Safety Council for almost forty years. Analyses computed annually and published in industry rate pamphlets and *Accident Facts* have proven of utmost importance in evaluating the leading causes of accidents.

Some industries through their trade associations have recorded accident rates for almost fifty years. In most instances, even the divisions of an industry can establish their positions with regard to number and types of accidents and can determine their experience in comparison with national averages.

There are a large number of codes relating to safety. Continuing research has been necessary over the years to keep these codes in line with current industrial development.

The development of new products, such as synthetic rubber and plastics that have been incorporated in safety equipment and devices, has made it necessary to rewrite codes to include new and acceptable materials of construction.

Special research projects, such as those making studies of walkway surfaces and safety belts, can be and have been financed by private sources and coordinated by the National Safety Council. Since the Council is not an approval agency, results of these projects are given as a summary of findings with no attempt to set minimum standards.

Safety and the law

The earliest legal steps taken for industrial safety were regulative or concerned with setting up bodies to investigate and correct abuses.

In the second decade of this century, the great legal moves were largely concerned with workmen's compensation payments.

In the following years, there has been a gradual growth in regulation of industry on safety matters by federal, state, and local governments. The Walsh-Healey Act, which deals with companies having supply con-