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SAFETY AND HEALTH TOPIC SHEET NO. 10:
POLICY, PROCEDURES AND PERMIT TO WORK

A safety and health 'topic sheet' aimed at raising awareness of hazards in the rope access industry. The series may be of use as a toolbox talk.

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The following definitions are useful:

1.2   **Policy**

o   *Clear, simple statements of how your organisation intends to conduct its business. They provide a set of principles to help with decision making.*

1.3   **Procedures**

o   *How each policy will be put into action in your organisation.*

1.4   Each procedure should outline:

- who will do what;

- what steps they need to take;

- when they should be done (timescales); and

- which documentation to use (This may include forms, checklists, flowcharts, etc.).

1.5   Procedures are a documented way of doing something. Companies should establish their own procedures, in accordance with the ICOP and TACS; and appropriate to the scope of work.

1.6   In undertaking any work, the risk assessment(s) and method statement(s) should be familiar to you. Do not deviate from them without good cause. If in doubt, stop work and inform your supervisor. The work - and risk assessment, method statement and procedures - may need to be reviewed and amended before work starts again.

1.7   If you deviate from or ignore instructions and get caught - or something goes wrong - you may have little protection. That said, you should raise any concerns straight away rather than follow instructions blindly.

1.8   **Permit to work**

o   *A system to ensure that authorised and competent people have thought about foreseeable risks and that such risks are avoided by using suitable precautions. It is not simply permission to carry out a dangerous job!*

1.9   A permit to work system is generally associated with a hazardous task and/or environment which needs to be properly managed, e.g. hot works, work at height, confined space work, etc. 'Hold points' will be identified and a permit issued before work can start. The process will require certain individuals to confirm that identified control measures have been identified and put in place.

Example

A sub-contractor needs to access a roof to undertake work at a height. The main contractor operates a permit to work system.

Before a permit is issued, the main contractor ensures that a risk assessment and method statement is in place; and that all the necessary controls are in place for the work to be carried out safely, e.g. trained workers, barriers, personal protective equipment, etc. Only then will they allow access to the roof via a locked plant room.

Once the work is completed the permit is closed ('signed off') by all those involved; indicating that checks have been made that the work area is safe and secure.

2   WHAT CAN GO WRONG …

2.1   Consider the following scenarios. You may be able to think of other examples, based on your own experience?

Scenario: Procedures

A rope access technician, when carrying out a task, deviated from the agreed procedure as he thought that his way would be quicker and easier. There was an accident and an expensive item of equipment was broken. Although the equipment breakage was an accident, because the technician deviated from the procedure they were deemed responsible for the breakage and subsequently disciplined.

Procedures are not only in place for safety.

Scenario: Permit to work

A permit to work system was in place to access a roof in order to undertake work at a height. When the technicians arrived they 'signed on' to the system and given access to the roof. When the task was complete the permit was 'closed off' by the client. One of the conditions of closing the permit was that the plant room access was locked by the client, in order to prevent unauthorised access. Later that week a worker accessed the roof, which had not been locked, and was seriously injured in a fall.

Liability lay with the client as the permit, as a required control measure had not been implemented.

Permits to work are not just for safety, they also provide proof of liability.

What can go wrong?

What examples can you think of ….

3 WHY THINGS CAN GO WRONG AND HOW TO PREVENT IT …

3.1 Things can go wrong for a number of reasons. Ensure that you implement measures to prevent failure. Some examples are given:

3.2 **Procedures**

- **Deviation from procedures**
  - o Review procedures to ensure they are correct; up to date; effective; and identify the correct training and supervision

3.3 **Permit to work**

- **Not used**
  - o When assessing a task look at the control measures required and identify whether a permit to work system would help ensure that they are implemented. Make it clear to staff and sub-contractors exactly which task(s) require the completion of a permit. A permit is not always required.

- **Not completed**
  - o Whether issuing a permit, or working under it, you should ensure that it has been completed properly. Follow the control measures identified. Close out the permit as required; and ensure that there are people available to do so. Try and keep things simple. If the entire process is laborious and time-consuming it is more likely to be ignored.

> **Not fulfilling the requirements for procedures and a permit to work may result in accidents, injuries or fatalities.**
>
> **It may also result in disciplinary proceedings or loss of jobs without an accident necessarily having happened.**

4 ACTION

4.1 Review your management system, in particular for the need to implement a permit to work.

5 REFERENCES

5.1 Further information can be found in:

(a) IRATA International code of practice for industrial rope access (Third edition, September 2016)[1]:
  - o Part 1, 1.4.2.6 Exclusion zones
  - o Part 2, 2.2.6, Procedures and personnel to be in place before work begins
  - o Part 2, 2.11.7, Pre-work checking (and, specifically, 2.11.7.1, Permit to work)
  - o Part 2, 2.11.8, Exclusion zones
  - o Part 2, 2.11.14, Termination of a job

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[1]   www.irata.org/default.php?cmd=215&doc_id=4336

5.2   For a list of current (and past) 'safety communications' by IRATA, see www.irata.org

6   RECORD FORM

6.1   An example *Safety and Health Topic Sheet: Record Form* is given below. Members may have their own procedure(s) for recording briefings to technicians and others.

7   FURTHER READING

Guidance on permit to work systems, A guide for the petroleum, chemical and allied industries (HSE, HSG250)[2]

Permit to work systems (HSE)[3]

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[2]   www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg250.pdf
[3]   www.hse.gov.uk/comah/sragtech/techmeaspermit.htm

Topic Sheet No. 10
Policy, procedures and permits

IRATA SAFETY AND HEALTH TOPIC SHEET – RECORD FORM	
Site:	
Date:	
Topic(s) for discussion:	Topic Sheet No. 10: Policy, procedures and permit to work
Reason for talk:	
Start time:	**Finish time:**

Attended by *Please sign to verify understanding of briefing*	
Print name:	**Signature:**

Continue overleaf (where necessary)

Matters raised by employees:	**Action taken as a result:**

Continue overleaf (where necessary)

Briefing leader *I confirm I have delivered this briefing and have questioned those attending on the topic discussed.*					
Print name:		**Signature:**		**Date:**	
Comments:					