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Using gas monitors to elevate your company's safety culture

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There are countless articles, blog posts, and books focused on the keys to a successful safety program. Each one reiterates the importance of things like comprehensive training, measurable goals, and accountability, and thorough job hazard analysis and incident investigation. Experts also agree that employee engagement and empowerment is vital. Employees who relentlessly pursue the identification and remediation of hazards with full support from all levels of management contribute to a culture that allows everyone to be safer each and every day.

Conceptually, employee engagement as a strategy for encouraging a safety culture makes sense. But how do we translate concepts to applications? One way is to purchase safety equipment that will facilitate employee engagement. Personal gas detectors, for example, are available with features and functionality that can empower workers to be more engaged while also providing management with tools to further encourage that engagement. The right gas detector can help transform the words "we encourage our workers to participate in our safety culture" to reality.



Wireless communication keeps employees in the know

Perhaps the most effective way to make safety more visible across a team is to implement wireless gas detection. When personal gas monitors are able to communicate to one another wirelessly, employees gain valuable insight into the safety status of others. They can see gas alarms across a worksite, and then can use the alarm data to make better decisions. For example, during a confined space entry, the attendant and anyone working nearby can know that the entrant has encountered toxic levels of H2S. They can then make an educated decision about how to move forward with a rescue.

Proactive data mining

Datalogs can provide insight into gas events that have already happened, but collecting data from instruments on a regular basis can help companies be proactive in their support of safety. For example, software can tell you that 80% of your instruments are properly maintained. Sharing that statistic with employees and then brainstorming ideas for how to improve it creates an atmosphere of collaboration. Everyone can work together to prevent injuries or deaths caused by equipment that was not properly maintained.

What's more, when gas alarms are viewed in software, it's much easier to find trends. For example, if moderate to high levels of CO are detected every time a particular process is run, teams can work together to review the process and eliminate the cause of the gas release. Such actions send a clear signal to employees that management wants to prevent accidents and isn't going to wait for a catastrophic event before taking action.

Employees are more than a serial number

It's one thing to place a label on an instrument to indicate who it's assigned to, but displaying the employee's name in the firmware better reinforces ownership of that piece of safety equipment. Consider a laptop. If you were handed two laptops, one labeled on the exterior with your name and the other with your name visible on the home screen, which one would you better take ownership of? Which method of labeling better reinforces that management took the time to provide equipment because they want to keep you safe?

Innovations recently released to the market now make it possible for gas detectors to be quickly assigned to workers at any time, regardless of location. Employees are able to see that they are more than a serial number while managers are able to view gas alarm history by employee name.

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Some gas detectors are able to display custom messaging in the event a gas alarm occurs. For example, the instruments can display "Go to Muster A" if a high H2S alarm occurs. This type of custom messaging allows companies to extend policies and procedures beyond an office and into the field with just-in-time messaging.

Custom messaging is also available when an instrument is powered on. Critical messaging from toolbox meetings, company best practices, and corporate-wide safety initiatives can be displayed on the instrument screen, providing another touch point to remind employees of the importance of the message.

Even policies around instrument maintenance can be reinforced through customizable maintenance reminders. If your company's policy is to dock instruments for calibration monthly, your gas detectors should automatically remind users to perform that maintenance task on time. Employees are more likely to take ownership of policies and procedures when they are ingrained in daily tasks.

Keep up with what's new

When a manufacturer releases new firmware, it generally includes new features as well as some improvements in the functionality of the previous version. Selecting gas detectors that can be easily upgraded as firmware is released sends a clear message that management is concerned with providing employees with the "latest and greatest." Providing an employee with a gas detector with firmware that is several versions behind, on the other hand, can make it look like the company isn't investing in the best possible safety tools.

Creating and furthering a safety culture that includes high levels of employee engagement requires time and effort. Selecting the right tools, however, can help to transform intentions into reality. Start by looking for a personal gas detector that includes wireless communication, features options for proactive data mining, provides customization to support engagement and company policies, and that is easy to keep up-to-date. With the right gas detector, your team will have another tool in their arsenal as they make the choices necessary to return home safely at the end of the job.

To learn more about the technologies that are improving safety cultures and making gas detection users safer, visit <http://www.indsci.com/technology/> or call us at (412) 788-0400 X2010.

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