

TECHNICAL SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

INTRODUCTION

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BY WAY of a few introductory remarks concerning the six articles pertaining to plant safety which were presented during the Safety Symposium at the September 24-26, 1956 meeting of the American Oil Chemists' Society, it might be mentioned that President T. H. Hopper and the Governing Board, on the occasion of the Spring meeting in Houston, decided to establish a permanent Technical Safety Committee to round out the engineering service that the Society is performing for the oil and fat industry specifically and for the general public as a whole. It is planned that the committee will be composed of three subcommittees whose membership would have a major interest in solvent extraction, or laboratory, or general plant operations; these subcommittees, in turn, will be composed of Task Groups which will attack one or the other of the problems which concern the committee.

In addition to handling specific tasks, such as studying extraction-plant solvent-loss problems or general plant-corrosion problems from a technical safety view-

point, the committee's work will also be directed toward creating an atmosphere of safety within the oil and fat industry by encouraging the presentation at the Society's meetings and publication in the Society's Journal of papers dealing with fire and health problems confronting the industry as well as studying and re-evaluating current safety regulations and practices. People tend to cling to their illusions and customs with great tenacity so, in order to eliminate an undesirable practice or to gain acceptance of a new but desirable concept, it often is necessary to apply the weight and force that only is possible within an organized group. By each member of the committee and each plant or company contributing a bit, the aggregate should result in an improved safety record for the oil and fat industry. Any individual who thinks that he can contribute something worthwhile is asked to volunteer his services rather than wait for the various chairmen to ask him since they may not be familiar with his situation.

The Role of Personnel in Safety of Solvent-Extraction Operations

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THE SUBJECT OF SAFETY in solvent-extraction operations has received an increasing amount of attention over the past few years. The increase in interest is quite natural in view of the rapid expansion which this method of processing has enjoyed.

A study of the literature on safety will reveal that most of the rules, regulations, and advice set forth are sound and well worth heeding. No effort will be made to review the literature, nor will we attempt to cover the whole field. Rather we would like to confine our discussion to the influence of personnel on safety.

Personnel selection is the first step toward safety in solvent-plant operation. The employee should have the intelligence to understand the operation and the hazards involved. He should be thoroughly reliable. A person who does not meet these requirements will endanger not only himself but his fellow workers and the property of his employer. Obviously a person who is highly nervous or excitable is not suited for solvent-plant operation. In emergencies a person of this type may act before thinking, and such action can prove fatal. On more than one occasion the writer has seen unnecessary personal injury result from spur-of-the-moment action. It is a matter of record that some people are susceptible to accidents. Such people serve as originators of accidents and, in the case of hazardous operations, it frequently happens that the originator is not the only person to suffer injuries. One individual can serve to break down morale and disorganize an entire group. The extreme of this type appears at times to be "rehearsing for an accident" and might be compared to the

driver who weaves in and out of traffic on a crowded highway.

The importance of proper instruction and training of the new employee should never be under-estimated. An effort should be made to develop the proper attitude in the employee. An attitude of fear is not a healthy one, and it is generally true that we fear the things we do not understand. Instruction and training should be directed toward having the employee understand the operation, recognize the hazards that exist, respect these hazards, but never fear them. In starting up new plants, the author has seen untrained people develop such a deep fear of the operation that it was necessary to transfer them to other jobs. It is much better if these fears can be recognized before hand; unless they can be overcome, the employee should not be assigned to the solvent plant.

Ideal conditions for training exist when new employees are hired for an existing operation. Here the new man can receive his training and develop a degree of self-confidence while working side by side with trained personnel. In the case of a new plant it is highly desirable that operating personnel be given prior training at an existing installation. If this is not possible, the burden of training must fall on the shoulders of a few key men and problems become more acute.

IT IS STILL TRUE that "actions speak louder than words." Along with instruction the use of fire-fighting equipment should be demonstrated. Methods of coping with other emergencies which may arise