



Petroleum Safety Significant Incident Report No. 03/2010

Excavator damages buried small bore pipe in compressor station and causes gas release

Incident

During works at a compressor station, an excavator struck and fractured a 2 inch diameter utility line. Fortunately, no ignition occurred nor were there any injuries. However, the compressor station did need to be isolated and evacuated.

The emergency response was adequate and the event did not escalate.

Contributory factors

- There was a failure to adhere to business processes during planning and the actual works — if followed, these processes would have prevented the incident. The business processes included the requirements for risk assessment, the Permit to Work system, and procedures for identifying utilities and other services.
- The persons undertaking key management and supervisory roles during planning and the actual works did not understand the need for, or could not implement, the business processes with the necessary rigour.
- The licensee's investigation identified a culture where non-compliance with business processes was tolerated under certain circumstances. Consequently, no-one within the licensee organisation questioned the non-compliances that led to this incident.

Comments and preventative actions

- Personnel holding management and supervisory roles not only need to be aware of the business systems that are in place to protect the pipeline, but also need to be the role models for their subordinates to ensure that a culture of non-compliance does not evolve.
- The successful implementation of the emergency response plan demonstrated that, if managed properly, emergency situations do not necessarily escalate. Licensees must ensure that their emergency response processes cover the potential range of incidents and will function when required.

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