

Oil and gas shore terminal (non-North Sea) permit to work arrangements (2006)

Situation: I was re-visiting the same shore terminal as in case study 1, some months later, with a colleague (Clem Maggiore, a very experienced guy who had worked for many years in the North Sea). We were reviewing the Permit-to-Work (PTW) arrangements.

The facility manager (the same guy as in case study 1) explained they didn't use a PTW proforma, but they followed a process which was written up in longhand in a large notebook, which he brought down from a shelf in his office. He showed an example of a PTW assessment where the hazards were considered, the controls were identified, and the isolation and de-isolation methods were described. It all looked very good, if a little primitive.

Afterwards, we went offshore to do similar work on the client's offshore platforms. However, Clem was unhappy. "It didn't smell right", he said. So, when we returned to shore after three days, we went back to the shore terminal again (my third visit to the facility).

We went back to see the facility manager and asked again about their PTW arrangements. He reached for the large notebook and opened it at the same place to show us the same PTW assessment we had seen previously. Clem said "No, we've seen that one already, can you show us another one?" At this point, the facility manager blushed..... he had been caught out.

There were no other PTW assessments; this was the only one, and he kept it handy to show auditors.

Conscientious, experienced guys like Clem and Hughie (case study 2 above) can detect when things are wrong – they have sixth senses.

Moral: This was a case of blatant abuse of the rules and should have led to disciplinary action. I doubt that it did, though.