



Petroleum Safety Significant Incident Report No. 02/2010

Excavator damages coating of buried pipeline in compressor station

Incident

Excavation of a pipeline within a compressor station for the purpose of inspecting the coating integrity resulted in an excavator damaging the pipeline coating.

The incident was exacerbated by a lack of immediate reporting, and was only identified through the investigation of another incident. If left untreated, the damage would have been a latent defect in the pipeline of which the licensee was unaware.

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 pipeline location.
- 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.

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.
- This incident highlights the need for rigorous reporting of incidents, particularly those involving contact with the pipeline, within each licensee organisation. While this may be difficult to achieve, it is important so that potential problems are not left to escalate in the future.
- Accident and dangerous occurrence reporting requirements have been expanded with the 2010 update of petroleum pipeline legislation. An incident such as that described here may need to be reported to the Department of Mines and Petroleum and new reporting forms are being issued.

Alan Gooch

DIRECTOR, PETROLEUM SAFETY BRANCH

2 August 2010