

Continuing my series on Blind Spots in HAZOPs, the next focus is on the HAZOP leader.

Now the HAZOP leader is the focal point of the HAZOP around which all discussions in the HAZOP revolve and conclude. So any blind spot from the HAZOP Leader tends to be magnified and seriously affects the outcome of the HAZOP.

So let us dive into the Blind Spots of a HAZOP Leader

1. The Design black hole

Most of the HAZOP leaders are good Chemical Engineers and come from a Process Design or Operations background. So it is natural they cannot resist a healthy discussion on the Pros and Cons of a design. But having this in a HAZOP can completely derail the Safety review. HAZOP Leaders beware, HAZOP meeting is not a Design Review meeting.

2. Copy and Paste trap

Partly to be blamed on the use of software to prepare HAZOP reports, this can be most dangerous. HAZOP leaders especially those who do repetitive HAZOPs on similar plants tend to copy past reports and use them with modifications. Well no two plants are same and that is even more so applicable to HAZOPs. What is started as a time saving device leads to glaring omissions . Shortcuts seldom work.....

3. The know it all Syndrome

The HAZOP leader is a facilitator and this role should be clearly understood not just by the participants but by the leader too. Each participant in the HAZOP brings in his/her own expertise to the table and they should be paid attention to. The HAZOP leader has to realise that there is fine line between leading the group to the proper conclusion and imposing one's views on the group.

4. The devil lies in the details

The HAZOP leader might be great technically as well as managing the group but the final output of the HAZOP is the report. If the discussions and the final recommendations are not properly recorded the entire exercise can go to waste. Imagine someone just writing " Install a safety valve" in the recommendations.

5. The eternal fence sitter

There come many instances in a HAZOP where diametrically opposite views crop up. At these points it is imperative that the HAZOP leader takes a stands and brings the opposing views to a common ground. What cannot work is a Leader who supports both views and lets the opposing parties fight it out. While this approach can work in Politics but not definitely in a HAZOP.

So now I have addressed the Human Factor in HAZOPs. The next two articles will reflect on the documentation/ data part. Keep watching this space for more.