

Safety in Ex environments

Practical approach to IECEx certification for industrializing countries

Incidents such as the explosion that caused the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 clearly demonstrate the need for the strictest safety measures not only for equipment operated in hazardous environments, but also for the people who man these installations and often work in harsh and extreme conditions.

IECEX, the IEC System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres, was invited to address these issues, focusing primarily on personnel competence, at the IEC industrializing country workshop which took place during the General Meeting in Melbourne. IECEx is the only international system that covers the testing and certification of equipment, repair and overhaul facilities and personnel competence.

Chaired by Kerry McManama, IECEx Chairman, who warmly welcomed all participants, the workshop attracted more than 80 people from 31 Members and Affiliate countries. Also present were Phuntsho Wangdi, the new IEC Affiliate Leader, and Evah Oduor, the IEC Affiliate Coordinator for Africa.

The session was a balanced mix of presentations and discussions. This interactive and practical approach was extremely well received by all participants who showed a keen interest in the issues that were raised and had many very specific questions for the speakers.

Benefits of IECEx

Chris Agius, IECEx Executive Secretary, introduced the IECEx System,

described its structure and Schemes and explained the benefits of using the system for industry, governments and regulators.

Case study: Brunei Darussalam

Liaw Wai Khiong, Co-Chairman of the Brunei Darussalam National Electrotechnical Committee (TECO Electrical) and the IECEx focal point, presented the challenges faced by his country to ensure Ex competence in hazardous environments such as oil and gas refineries, petrochemical industries, power plants and the armed forces. While the country has adopted some IEC International Standards (e.g. the IEC 60079-10 series on the classification of areas in explosive atmospheres), no formal national standards or regulations are in place.



Kerry McManama (left) and Chris Agius

One additional problem is the high turnover of personnel.

Why personnel competence is essential

The final presentation of the day focused on the IECEx Certification of Personnel Competence Scheme and was made by Ralph Wigg, a member of



Liaw Wai Khiong



From left: Evah Oduor, Phuntsho Wangdi, Françoise Rauser (IEC Affiliate Secretariat) and Ralph Wigg

the IECEX Executive and Chairman of the newly established ExPCC (IECEX Certificate of Personal Competence Committee), one of the IECEX committees responsible for

overseeing the day-to-day operation of the IECEX CoPC Scheme.

Wigg first defined what competence is and why it is required, then went on to

explain the philosophy of the scheme, the 10 units of competence (covering specific work functions in hazardous environments) and the complete process applicants have to go through to obtain a Certificate of Personnel Competence.

Future events

The Q&A sessions that followed the presentations gave participants the opportunity to ask questions that concerned not only the CoPC but all other IECEX Schemes. The possibility of having similar events in other parts of the world was mentioned and is now under consideration by the IEC.

Chris Agius also informed attendees of another event they could participate in: the upcoming IECEX International Conference that will take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 20-21 March 2012. For more information on the Dubai conference: www.iecex.com