Safety in the redesigning of production lines

This paper is a case study report on how safety considerations were handled in the process of redesigning a production line. The design process was characterized as a specification and negotiation process between engineers from the company and the supplier organization. The new production line became safer, but not as a result of any intentional plan to integrate safety aspects into the design process. Instead, the supplier's design of a new piece of equipment had a higher built-in safety level. The engineering team in the company was aware of the importance of safety aspects neither in the specification material nor in their face-to-face meetings with the supplier. Safety aspects were not part of their work practice. On this basis, it was suggested that formal guidelines or procedures for integrating safety in the design of production lines would have no effect. Instead, the researchers set up a ‘history workshop’ with the engineering team. The workshop clarified the sequence of events and discussions that took place during the design process and opened for a discussion of the role of safety aspects. During the workshop new insights emerged into the question of how to integrate safety aspects in the company’s future design processes.

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