

Keeping an eye on the road

Safety at work is not a luxury everyone has, but a BP-backed scheme is trying to change that.



Zhang Guohong, left,
with a safe BP driver

You never can be sure who's watching you, or how routine behaviour could affect a co-worker a few feet away or a stranger on the other side of the planet.

Consider the motorists arriving for work recently at BP's Naperville, Illinois, complex or the BP Chemical complex in Lima, Ohio, who couldn't have guessed their driving habits were being observed and might save a life in China.

But Zhang GuoHong was watching. "Every driver would stop at every stop sign and look around in all directions even if no other car was approaching," Zhang says in obvious awe. "Every driver! Each one! All of them!"


Beijing-based Zhang, is one of China's leading industrial safety experts and visited the facilities as a guest of BP, International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

They are all part of a safety training programme that encourages businesses in industrialized countries to share knowledge about health, safety and the environment (HSE) with developing nations.

Zhang, a senior engineer in the Safety Technical Department of China Petrochemical Company (SINOPEC) lost his father in a construction accident and bears his own scars from work incidents. His visit to BP's facilities was his first trip outside of China and during that time he learned how BP deals with HSE issues on a daily basis.

One aspect that impressed Zhang is "the way that your goal of 'getting HSE right' is part of everything." He also notes the speed with which issues are resolved. "You have extraordinarily productive meetings and everyone becomes involved, not just your leaders."

The engineer says he will take his new safety education back to China and encourage similar practices within his company. He also hopes to impart some of this new-found knowledge to Chinese industry as a whole through newspaper and magazine articles.

"I also want to tell that BP is a very good company and treats its workers well," he says. "And I want to say that BP people are very kind and helpful. I want to say that from my heart." 

Words: Tom Seslar

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