A Description of Reasons for Risk-taking at a Large Steel Manufacturing Company


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To investigate reasons for risk-taking at a large steel manufacturing company in Sweden which employs about 1000 people.

Aim

- A qualitative and explorative study design was used.
- Sixty-six workers participated in ten focus group interviews.
- The situation of safety at work was discussed in semi-structured focus group interviews, where the employees themselves told about and explained reasons behind risk-taking.
- The interviews were analyzed with qualitative content analysis.

Methods

- Reasons for risk-taking were formed into one main category and six subcategories (Table).
- The workers described that tiredness results in more risk-taking (1.2):
  “We are shift workers, and one can be terribly sleepy sometimes” and “Four AM, in the morning, one does not think so damn well”
- The workers described that being “blind-to-flaws” means that one follows certain routines during work, becoming blind to risks that one should see (1.4):
  “It is routine, one gets accustomed to being out in production, one does not think, one does what one should, but does not think about what one is doing”
- The workers felt that too little staff on a shift team is bad for safety, since the others that work will have to take more risks because of the extra workload (1.5):
  “Even if there is a temporary cut down of the staff, it is expected that production should not be affected, and oneself has the mindset to ‘go at it’ and maintain the production, even though that is a bit wrong, since it involves more risk-taking”
- The workers described that to stress and to be in a hurry can be because of the demand to meet a deadline, or just to get the work done quickly so that one can get some rest afterwards (1.6):
  “Being under stress, is when one starts to use shortcuts”

Results

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Reasons for risk-taking: the main- and subcategories of the results

(1.) One’s state-of-the-day and external work environment circumstances affects safety risk-taking

The following aspects contribute to more risk-taking:

(1.1.) Being new-at-work
(1.2.) Being tired
(1.3.) Being nonchalant to the safety risks
(1.4.) Working on routine and being “blind-to-flaws”
(1.5.) Too little staff to do the job
(1.6.) To stress, hurry, and work faster in order to save time

Conclusion

Reasons for risk-taking are partly influenced by one’s state-of-the-day and partly by external work environment circumstances.