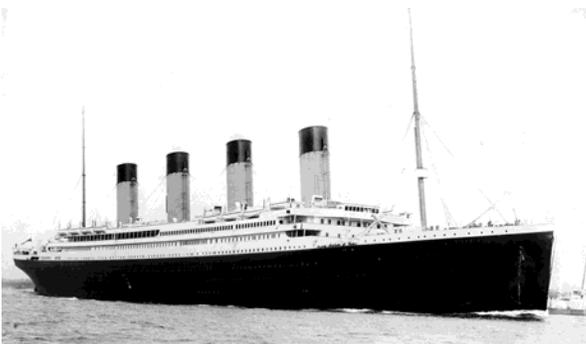


Emergency Preparation – The *Titanic* Disaster

July 2012



April 15, 2012 marked the 100th anniversary of the loss of the ocean liner *Titanic* in the North Atlantic Ocean, approximately 2½ hours after hitting an iceberg. Over 1,500 people died in the most famous maritime disaster in history. Thousands of pages have been written about the loss of the *Titanic*, as well as many documentary and fictional movies produced. Many focus on the construction of the ship and the actions of its captain and crew. Whatever the construction and operating issues, attention to one particular issue could have saved many lives – Emergency Preparation!

Some specific failures in emergency preparedness before the sinking of the *Titanic* included:

- Not enough lifeboats for all passengers and crew, perhaps because the builders considered the ship “unsinkable”!
- No lifeboat drills had been conducted, and many people did not know where to go or what to do.
- Many of the first lifeboats to leave the *Titanic* were not full and some occupants were reluctant to pull other people from the icy water for fear of capsizing their lifeboat.
- The decision to abandon ship was delayed while the captain and crew assessed damage. Had the captain started evacuation earlier, before people began to panic, more lifeboats may have been filled in a more orderly evacuation.

What can you do?

- ➔ Process plants may conduct many types of emergency drills. Fire, leak or spill response, shelter-in-place, evacuation, and severe weather are some common types. Be aware of your responsibility in each situation – it may be different.
- ➔ In a drill or actual emergency, watch for others who may not remember what they should do, especially new employees, visitors and contractors. Help them to respond safely.
- ➔ Promptly report any problem you observe during a drill or emergency to your supervisor. Some examples – actions which cannot be done in the available time, things you can't do safely because of the emergency condition, exit signs that can't be seen or are confusing, emergency alarms or speakers that can't be heard, required safety equipment which is not available or not working properly. Report your observations - it may save a life some day.
- ➔ Take drills seriously and remind others that they should as well. Don't think of drills as a time to see people from other units and let the drill become a social event.
- ➔ When you read about incidents in other industries, ask yourself if there is anything you can learn from what happened to make your plant safer!
- ➔ Don't let your plant “sink” due to a poor emergency plan or lack of knowledge of how to respond.



Not all Process Safety lessons come from our industry!