



PROCESS SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN PETROLEUM REFINERIES: RAISING THE SAFETY BAR

What is it?

Process Safety Management (PSM) is a set of rules and procedures developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) with the intent to reduce the frequency and severity of incidents resulting from releases of highly hazardous chemicals in certain industries, including petroleum refineries. Washington State's Department of Labor and Industries' Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) is the state OSHA program which enforces this rule.

Why is it important?

The process safety management rule has been around for over 25 years and yet catastrophic events continue to occur in the refining industry. Investigations of refinery incidents have identified consistent, underlying causes of these incidents, but have failed to motivate meaningful changes that would be more protective of workers in these facilities. This highlights the need for stronger regulations pertaining to process safety management to prevent further major incidents.

New regulations are being drafted...

Washington State is working to revise the 25-year-old standard specific to refineries, in order to require those companies to use best-practice engineering and management practices to prevent process incidents. Some key changes include:

- Employee collaboration-requires employers to involve worker representatives at all levels
- Hierarchy of Hazardous Controls Analysis assessing hazard prevention.
- Effective Human Factors program addressing staffing, fatigue, worker interface with equipment, and communication systems.
- Management of Organizational Change assessments prior to the reduction of staffing levels.
- Process Safety Culture Assessment, and a PSM Management program among other changes.

What workers are saying:

"The level of complexity in these plants can have significant consequences"

"The average worker does not know a lot about process safety."

"Workers have been kept in the dark and kept out of the process safety management process"

"Collaboration means a partnership and the new standard will allow us to better partner with the industry to keep our people safe"

"At the end of the day, process safety is no more funerals"

TO LEARN MORE PLEASE VISIT WA STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES WEBPAGE:

<https://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/GrantsPartnerships/Committees/PSM/default.asp#Rulemaking>

