

Safety Conferences on Safety in Mines

I – SAFETY CONFERENCE

One of the few major disasters in the history of the Indian coal mining occurred in the shape of an explosion in Chinakuri Colliery in February- 1958, resulting in 175 deaths. As a result of the Chinakuri disaster, the Government of India convened the First Conference of Safety in Mines in 1958-59. The first conference on safety in mines had recommended that two general inspections of mines should take place every year, special inspections should be made with reference to a particular object in view, i.e. general supervision, ventilation, coal dust, support in depillaring areas etc., mines where conditions are unsatisfactory should be placed under frequent inspections until the mine has been brought to a certain standard, a number of surprise inspections should be made in the afternoon and night shifts.

II – SAFETY CONFERENCE

One of the biggest coal dust explosion in the history of the Indian mining, resulting in 265 deaths, occurred in May-1965, at Dhori Colliery, which was till then considered a non gassy mine. The court of enquiry, which enquired in the matter, made a number of recommendations of far reaching importance, some of which were later incorporated in the Coal Mines Regulation. The Second conference on Safety in Mines was held in July-1966, in Calcutta to review afresh the entire position regarding safety in mines. The Conference was informed that on the recommendations of the Dhori Court of Inquiry and suggestions made by the Safety Experts from the U.K. and the ILO the Chief Inspector of Mines had either already taken or proposed to take action in regard to the following-

- (a) Provision of safety lamps
- (b) Conducting of surveys by managements to check the presence of gas
- (c) Ventilation standards
- (d) Installation of mechanical ventilators
- (e) Clearance of coal dust.

III – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The third conference on Mines Safety was held in July-1973 at Calcutta. Just three months before the third conference on safety in mines, a gas explosion, killing 48 persons, shook the Jitpur Colliery of the Indian Iron and Steel Company in March-1973.

IV – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Fourth Conference of Mines Safety was held in December-1978, at New Delhi. A minor consolation was the fact that it was the first conference which had not been held just after a major disaster. The conference discussed the suggestions, put forward by the Polish and the ILO experts, on the following lines-

- New strategies to be mapped out to achieve the objectives of reaching ZAP (Zero Accident Potential)
- A training College to be developed to train up the specialist like surveyor, engineer, ventilation officer, safety officer, etc.
- The statute to be made more rigorous, identifying higher standards of safety and prescribing the minimal conditions that are conducive to safety.
- The managements to develop their own internal safety organization, to be placed directly under the Managing Director, and work out its guidelines.

V – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Fifth Conference on Safety in Mines was held at New Delhi on 26th and 27th December-1980. This conference was also being organized under the shadow of a major mine accident, happened just one year before, same as the first three Safety Conferences.

(A gas ignition occurred at Baragolai Colliery in Assam on 22 nd July-1979, resulting in 16 deaths and 5 injuries. The possible cause might have been the fall of roof which had dislodged the supports and liberated CH₄, damaging a cable and producing an electric arc. It was evidently a case of gas ignition or mild explosion.)

VI – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Sixth Conference on Safety in Mines was held in New Delhi in January-1986. Conference discussed on the following issues-

- Accidents due to falls of roof and sides
- Accidents due to dumpers and trucks in opencast mine
- Accident due to fire in Oil Mines
- The Mine Environment with special reference to air borne dust and health of mine workers
- Accuracy of Mine Plans
- Development of Human Resources for Prevention of Accidents

VII – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Seventh Conference on Safety in Mines was held at New Delhi in December-1988. Major emphasis was laid on the important topics on safety in opencast mines and the occupational health services in mining industry.

VIII – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Eighth Conference on Safety in mines was held on 14-15 May-1993 at New Delhi. The Conference discussed on the following points-

- Prevention of Accidents in Coal Mines due to falls of roof
- Safety Education and Workers' Participation in safety Management
- Occupational Health Hazards
- Safety in Opencast and Surface Operations

IX – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Ninth Conference on Safety in Mines held on 2nd-3rd February, 2000 at New Delhi. The Conference discussed on the following points-

- Preventing Mine disasters from inundation
- Preventing Mine Disasters from Fire, and Effective Emergency Response
- Risk Management as a Tool or Development of Appropriate Health and Safety Management Systems
- Quality Control for Improving Safety
- Communication system between DGMS offices and Mine Management at Site
- Safety in Oil Mines -Blowout and fire hazards
- Occupational Health Surveillance in mining industry
- Increasing effectiveness of workers' participation in safety management

In the field of occupational health, the Indian industry continue to remain in a stage which is much below the acceptable standard set up by the developed world. The recent legislatives changes in respect of occupational health and the recommendations of the Conference on Safety in Mines are only tips of the Iceberg. Total elimination of silicosis and other occupational diseases are still a distant dream.

X – SAFETY CONFERENCE

The Tenth Conference on Safety in Mines was held on 26th and 27th November 2007, at New Delhi. The 10th National Conference on Safety in Mines was inaugurated by the Minister of State for Labour & Employment (Independent Charge), Shri Oscar Fernandes in the presence of Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy, the Minister of State for Mines and Shri M.V. Rajasekharan, Minister of State for Planning. Besides representatives of mine managements and Trade Unions, the Conference was attended by officials of State Government/Union Territories, professional bodies, academic and research institutes, service associations, chief executives officials (CEOs) of almost all mining companies of the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Fernandes said that Safety is not merely a concept or practice but it also recognizes the dignity of work and therefore all efforts should be made for the protection and safety of workers who are toiling for the prosperity of the nation. Shri Fernandes said that to work towards the objective of achieving 'Zero Accident Potential', serious introspection and analysis is needed for making an impact. He said there is a need for resources – for research, the subsequent development of new processes, equipment and work method and above all for training

and establishment of suitable reward system. These actions must accompany the development and implementation of legislation.

Shri Fernandes said that the various techniques of risk assessment and risk management contribute greatly towards improvement in the safety of mining operations. It is thus desirable that this technique, though in vogue in piecemeal manner as of now, be given the due impetus and dynamism that it deserves so as to realize its full potential. He said that investment in safety has a direct bearing on the overall performance of the mining company and it is expected that the mining companies will put adequate thrust on the safety budget to reduce accidents in mines and thereby improving the safety scenario of the country.

The Conference discussed the following points-

- Review of Status of Implementation of Recommendation of the 9th Conference on Safety in Mines
- Contractor work vis-a-vis Safety
- Safety Issues in mines in unorganized sector
- Occupational Health Surveillance and Notified Diseases
- Mechanization with a view to phase-out manual loading & to improve safety standards
- Reduction of risk from roof and side falls in coal mines
- Safety of Contractor Workers and Implementation of “Cold Work Permit” in Oil mines
- Belowground Communication and Tracking System
- “Safety Management System” : Strategies for Implementation and Path Forward
- Implementation of ILO Convention No.176 in mines

[The National Conferences on Safety in mines discuss the emerging safety issues in mines to identify the thrust areas for improvement in the safety standards in Indian mines and are attended by different stakeholders from mining industry of the country. The conferences review the status of safety in mining and adequacy of existing measures in improving working conditions in mines in a spirit of mutual cooperation.]

This National Conference is the highest tripartite forum at the national level for deliberation on issues connected with safety and health in mines. CEOs of the mining companies as employers' representatives, the leaders of the Central Trade Unions as workers' representatives, representatives of the Central and State Governments, professional institutions, academic and research institutes and members of Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Labour and Employment participate as delegates in the conference.]