CHAPTER 6
SUGGESTIONS

1. Improved Legislation

A few years ago, lethal methyl isocyanate gas, or MIC, leaked from the Union Carbide (India) Ltd. pesticide plant in the central Indian city of Bhopal, killing at least 1,750 people and injuring tens of thousands more. The world's worst industrial disaster remains very much on the minds of many in India. But the IIac incident demonstrates the large gap that remains between India's new-found awareness of industrial dangers, and adequate protection.

Ten years ago, India had almost no pollution codes. The government now claims it won't sacrifice environmental and safety standards, "even if we lose output," says one government official. In fact, if India enacted and enforced environmental legislation that currently is under discussion, it would leapfrog ahead of most developing countries and become a model for the Third World.

Those are big ifs. "This is a large country with large inertia," says Prabir Purkayastha, an engineer and member of Delhi Science Forum, a group of independent scientists who have studied the Bhopal disaster. Some critics maintain that existing laws are adequate but unenforced. Even government officials admit enforcement has been lax.

Everyone agrees, however, government and public awareness of environmental hazards has skyrocketed. Public-interest groups, formerly ignored, now have a stronger voice. Courts are used to combat pollution and are acting with more sympathy.

Some Bhopal-related investigations illustrate, however, that intent doesn't always translate into action in India. One year after the disaster, for example, doctors still vigorously debate the proper treatment of Bhopal gas survivors, citing conflicting studies.
Meanwhile a commission set up in Madhya Pradesh’ state capital, Bhopal shortly after the disaster to determine its causes is getting nowhere. "Nothing has happened, absolutely nothing," says lawyer Indira Jaisingh, who represents some of the victims at commission hearings. A number of criminal and scientific investigations were held but their findings haven't been made public.

Experiments, including the long-term effects of MIC on humans, still are being conducted under the supervision of the government's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. Bhopal-based doctors say there is strong evidence that many gas survivors have permanently impaired lung capacity. "Abnormalities in chromosomes" also were observed.

Despite the outcry against Union Carbide, India continues to welcome foreign investment and technology, say foreign business executives and Western diplomats. "The disaster didn't result in a generalized attack on multinationals," says Edward Stumpf, the commercial counsellor at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

For example, New Delhi-based Win-Medicare Ltd., a non-equity associate of Sterling Drug Inc. of New York, wanted to build a plant that involved potentially dangerous processes. After the Union Carbide disaster, the company asked the government if plans should be changed. "We were told it was up to us to take necessary steps to insure nothing happens," says Stephen Gregory, Sterling's India representative.

The government is insisting, however, that it knows more about what risks are involved and is demanding more information on potential manufacturing hazards. "If there is a lesson to learn, it is when we buy black boxes, we must know the entire consequences," says T.N. Seshan, secretary of a beefed-up Environment Ministry.

The government has debated upon a number of new environmental-control measures, to be introduced into Parliament. In the meantime, new factories must carry out environmental-impact studies and install safety equipment.
Existing factories are under scrutiny as well. Industrialists say safety inspectors who once made cursory checks are now making detailed tours. Bombay-based Bharat Gears Ltd., for example, was told recently that the location of a 10-year-old phosphating operation is dangerous and had to be moved. The company complied.

India has a long way to go. Even with their new brief, safety inspectors often are ill-trained and don't understand industrial hazards, government officials admit.

What is more, many of the biggest polluters are government corporations, which government regulatory agencies have been more reluctant to touch. Bribing of inspectors is common. Each inspector must cover hundreds of factories in a year.

Some multinationals have been criticized for allegedly taking advantage of lax pollution standards. Indofil Chemicals Ltd, a 53%-held subsidiary of Rohm & Haas Co. of Philadelphia, operated for years near Bombay without devices to control pollution in its gas and water emissions. Only recently did the company install a smokestack scrubber; water-pollution control is under construction. The company was threatened with legal action by the Maharashtra state Pollution Control Board.

Stinging eyes and shortened breath underline Bombay's industrial dilemma. Bombay is the country's business capital and location for thousands of factories. Cramped space and a never-ending stream of migrants have forced more of the city's estimated 11 million population into outlying districts such as Chembur.

In addition, because most companies don't supply adequate transportation and housing, many workers live as close as possible to the factories. Others come in their wake. This is what happened near the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal.
2. Safety Training is important:

A training program that merely tells workers the safety rules isn't going to shape into a top-notch safety climate. Even good training can be better, and managers don't have to look very far to get help for improving their program.

We've all heard that safety starts at the top. Successful safety training efforts have the support of managers and supervisors. The training program is created from investments of both money and time. Managers provide the training budget used to obtain audio video equipment, software and hardware, contracts with outside training providers and other supplies. Supervisors adjust work schedules so employees can attend training sessions.

There are other ways to involve managers and supervisors in the training program:

• If managers and supervisors regularly attend safety training sessions and always follow safety rules when there are in production areas, their example inspires employees to take safety seriously;
• If managers include evaluations of training participation and overall safety performance in performance reviews, workers have more incentive to participate in and pay attention to training programs and other safety efforts;
• If supervisors provide reports on employees' safety performance to the safety trainer, refresher training can be targeted to where it's needed most; and
• When supervisors and managers have an expanded role in the training program, the program has a stronger foundation to support improvement.

To improve training, the employees must do more than just show up for class.

3. Improved standards of Safety Equipments:

Standards are an important part of the world of safety equipment. Manufacturers need them to determine the performance requirements for products they design, make and sell, and the test procedures to assess conformity to those requirements. In several cases, it has been seen that the safety equipments are not standard. Sellers, purchasers and users need them to select the right product for the job, and understand its application and limitations. Government agencies incorporate them into workplace safety and health regulations. Thus, it is necessary for such
standards to be set in the first place and most importantly, there needs to be a reliable mechanism to check whether the standards are maintained or not.

4. Safety Inspectors:

The number of safety inspectors must increase. Currently, the Safety inspectors cannot achieve their objectives fully, just because the task force is less, as noted in the findings of the study.

5. Workers de-addiction programs:

Workers de-addiction programs must be regularly organized by the management. All employers should have a written and clear drug and alcohol policy for their workplace. The workplace policy should be supportive and not threatening. If the policies are threatening, workers will not voluntarily admit the truth about their addiction. The managers and owners need to understand that rehabilitation can work. Simply removing the employee out of the organization will not help the management in the long run.

One may agree to the fact that testing programs cannot be employed by the small scale units as they are very low on their welfare budgets. In such cases, supervisors need to be sufficiently skilled to observe the changes in behaviour that would suggest an existence of addiction. Generally, addicted people tend to be more careless and at times unnecessarily aggressive. The way they move and work and talk, can suggest an underlying addiction problem. Once the problem is identified, some counseling can be done and the worker can be rehabilitated.

6. Psychological training:

In the modern working environment, not only blue collar workers, but also the white collar workers are expected to be given psychological training. Workers get injured when at work. A worker's injury is should not be treated as only a medical condition, it's an example of a complicated bio/psycho/social phenomenon. By entering into the treatment process in advance and working with the doctor, studies have shown that psychological counseling and therapies can help injured workers to get back to work sooner.
Psychologists as experts play multiple roles; one role is as a consultant to the physician and physical therapist. The psychological trainer for example can counsel an employee who is depressed because of some adverse family condition.

This training can also develop the self confidence of the employees and increases their efficiency. It helps them to combat situations of stress and anxiety. Workers can gain better control over their emotions and not over react to situations that create various kinds of discomforts for their physical and mental wellbeing. Psychological training should be given to them at least once in six months so that the mental health of the workers remains intact.

7. Family welfare

Factory workers work in risky environments to support their families. If the factory managers do anything that would support their families, for example, educational facilities, medical aid etc., it certainly would end up motivating the employees. It would not only create a sense of belonging amongst the workers but would also raise their efficiency levels which would lead to higher profits for the enterprise.

8. Punitive action for not using safety equipment:

In several cases during the research, it was observed that even though the safety equipment was provided, it was not used by the workers. The workers have their own set of complaints. It is the managers/foreman's or the supervisors job to counsel the workers and let them know the importance of using safety equipment. Consequences of not using the safety equipment should be properly explained to the workers.

If they are not found to be using it, a punishment or some kind of punitive action must be taken by the management. It is actually just a matter of being habituated to the use of a particular safety equipment. A worker may feel uncomfortable to use the safety equipment in the beginning, but slowly as time progresses, he would get adjusted to it, and would use the safety equipment on a regular basis. The importance of punishment is known to all of us. As a matter of fact, punishment and punitive provisions for not obeying certain orders or meeting some requirements form the subject matter of the control function in any organization. Therefore, as a
part of HR policies, it should be made mandatory, for every worker to use safety equipment. One way of doing this, is issuing a clear cut written direction to the workers that if they are found working without the safety equipment, they would be charged a fine. The fine need not be extravagant, it may be nominal. Another way of making safety equipment mandatory is imposing a half day or a full day leave being reduced. There are many ways in which this can be achieved.

9. Additional monetary benefits:

It is every workers right to receive fair wages. Workers who work on hazardous processes can get easily de-motivated and disoriented if the wages paid to them are not fair. But it all does not stop here. Just as the owners and capitalists expect more out of their workers and workshops, the workers tendency to expect more out of their employer cannot be said to be completely wrong.

It is suggested that in addition to paying fair wages, the workers should be given opportunities to earn extra benefits from their job wherever possible. When one would observe the basic lifestyle of the worker, one would see a hard working man, who lives in a basic rented accommodation with very less choices to make as to what he is supposed to eat before he calls the day off. The salaries paid to the workers in some cases are so less that there is very little chance for any upward deviation in the lifestyle of the worker. Paying fair wages on time certainly would keep the workers satisfied and comparatively less stressed.

10. Well trained managers/ supervisors:

At the level of small scale enterprises there is rarely any differentiation between management and ownership. Managers were found to be of a formal education background that was not always connected to the kind of workshop they managed. As a basic requirement, it is expected that a supervisor or a manager should know precisely the injuries that can arise out of a particular hazardous process.

Many a times, owners who manage may not be present at the workshop all the time due to various reasons. During such times, in some cases it was observed that a person who does not possess the essential skills and knowledge looks after the workshop. Such people with half
knowledge or no knowledge at all can prove to be helpless in situations where an accident happens. Such responsibilities should at least be given to well trained and skilled personnel who would react sensibly to alarming situations.

11. **Dumping of mobile phones:**

Mobile phone are multifunctional devices that can distract the workers in various ways. A sudden phone call may disrupt the concentration of the worker which can lead to a fatal injury. When discussed with supervisors or managers, it was observed that workers use mobiles phones as a primary means of reducing boredom at work. They achieve this by listening to MP3 music using "in-ear" headphones.

Such noise isolating headphones used by the workers for a prolonged time. It can cause temporary or permanent hearing loss. Besides, the workers refuse to wear the expected ear-muffs which are an ideal safety equipment, just because they want to enjoy their music.

One way in which the ill effects of using cell phones at work can be reduced is that the workers should be told to safely deposit their phones with the supervisor. Some basic locker facility should be provided to each worker where he/ she would be able to keep their cell phones or any valuables safely. It is important that such a change must be brought about gradually. The workers should be counseled that this provision aims primarily at their safety.

12. **Display of Safety posters and Safety Signs:**

During the study safety posters were not found to be up to the mark Safety signs were very rarely seen. In many places the safety posters were not displayed at all. In some places they were found to be torn and mutilated. Safety posters can save lives. They are a basic graphical devices that inform the workers about the way a particular job is to be done. They display what is correct and what is not. Some posters also show the consequences of not following certain norms. Such posters must be displayed in such a way that they hammer the sub conscious mind of the worker, time and again. Such posters must be updated and changed whenever required and necessary.
13. Educating the workers about the risk:
Before the workers are appointed, there are several reasons as to why they never get complete information about the risk, its consequences and precautionary measures to be undertaken. Some of the reasons are:

a. Negligence on the part of the employer,
b. Negligence on the part of the employee,
c. Lack of knowledge of the supervisor/trainer or manager,
d. Employers at times, feel that if the worker is told about the consequences, he would never accept the job,
e. Nature of the Job/environment,
f. Working conditions.

14. A more humanitarian approach:
Maratha Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) conducts a number of seminars, workshops and exhibitions. They spread awareness on the current issues and latest Technology and Tools including safety equipments. As one of the requirements of membership, managers of Small Scale Industries attend these seminars. Unfortunately, they all share a common excuse of
"lack of funds" to upgrade / buy safety equipment. MCCI comes up with valuable suggestions through their research activities. Not all that they suggest is implemented.

What needs to change here is the basic approach of the entrepreneurs. They need to adopt a more humanitarian approach. They need to know and understand that they will grow to be a big organization only when they consider the human aspect more sincerely and seriously. They need to consider the fact that the workers are human beings and have loved ones just like they do. Considering this fact, they must be more lenient and shell out more funds, wherever they feel that it would make a difference.