

Browne: Take action to put safety first

Safety has always been a priority for BP but in recent months the company has experienced a run of incidents that has prompted group chief executive Sir John Browne (right) to respond with a personal call stressing the need for everyone's commitment to safety



A COMPANY'S first duty to its employees is to ensure that they are safe, and protected from all the risks that exist, particularly in an industry dealing with products that can be dangerous. Our health, safety and environment (HSE) commitment is 'no accidents, no harm to people and no damage to the environment'.

Safety is not an optional extra, or an afterthought. Our own safety and that of all the people we come into contact with, must be our first thought. If we can't do our business under safe conditions, then we cannot do our business at all.

Our track record on safety is the bedrock of the trust on which we rely—the trust of our staff, our neighbours and the wider community.

Over the last few years, our safety performance has steadily improved through attention to standards, processes and behaviours. But our safety performance is still not good enough. We are still a long way short of best in class—as these figures show:

On a comparison of days away from

work case frequencies, we are on par with one of our leading competitors, another is some 25% better than us and Du Pont is four times better than us.

That shortfall has been emphasised by a series of incidents over the last few months—including serious fires and equipment failures. The result is that our operational integrity has come into question.

We have been fortunate that none of these incidents have resulted in serious injuries but we cannot rely on good fortune, or dismiss these incidents as run of bad luck, which will come to an end.

The potential for injury to our own staff and to the communities in which we work is high, and the damage to our reputation is already serious. There is absolutely no room for complacency.

Dick Olver, Doug Ford, Richard Flury and Byron Grote, as chief executives of the business streams, will be leading a process to renew our commitment to safety:

- investigating the cause of every incident in the closest detail

- ensuring that every team in every business unit understands their mandatory duties under the HSE management system and is equipped to fulfill those duties

- talking and listening to teams and individuals throughout the company so that we hear your concerns, and your view of the risks that should be tackled

- ensuring that necessary resources are available and making clear that budget problems can never be an excuse for a failure of safety. If funds are needed they will be made available.

In addition group HSE will be looking again at the need for group wide standards and advising on when those standards need to be applied.

In the end, of course, our performance on safety comes down to the actions of individuals. The things which you and I do, or fail to do, every day. Everyone of us makes the difference. That is why I am asking for your support to help us all ensure that BP lives up to and extends its reputation as a leader in safety.