

TenneT Safety Top Onshore Netherlands

7 February 2023
Arnhem, the Netherlands

Safety is all about leadership

Great open discussions took place during the third TenneT Safety Top with our partners working for Onshore Netherlands. For TenneT, discussion with the management of its key partners is very valuable. Conduct the safety dialogue, about how we can help each other work more safely, on the basis of trust.

In her opening remarks, Manon van Beek, CEO of TenneT, emphasised the importance of the safety discussions we have together. 'We are in the middle of the energy transition and want it to be done safely. It is important to speak about the responsibility we want to take on together throughout the entire supply chain. That includes lessons learned. Do not hesitate to tell us what you want to say and share what you want to share, because we want to establish a connection by listening and learning from each other.' 'Safety is about 'response and ability'. Feel responsible and hold each other accountable, because this way we make our work safer and that is what it is all about.



Safety is also leadership; '*the risk is in this room*'. We demonstrate leadership in all the big things we do, but also in the small things. How safe is the work environment? How do you respond when someone holds you accountable for safety? When you think '*the opportunity is in this room*', that is leadership.'

Together we are facing the challenge of moving the energy transition forward in the Netherlands and Germany. It is incredibly important to ensure that our people can work safely and that you can talk about this openly.

Maarten Abbenhuis, COO of TenneT, opened his presentation by saying: 'working on the energy transition and on the existing system is basically safe provided that everyone knows what they need to do, with whom and when. This is why making proper preparations together is so important.' During a major disruption on 2 September 2022, it quickly became apparent that the right safety decisions had been taken. While making the necessary preparations, all possible safety scenarios were discussed with everyone involved in the implementation process. The result was that no one was injured. This meant that any doubts about proper implementation were removed and that the colleagues involved were able to do



everything correctly. We can learn from this meticulous process.

Safety also involves psychological safety in which people are the key focus. How do we treat each other? How do we maintain our ability to influence the working atmosphere when work pressure is high? It is our task to make everyone within the chain aware that safety is not only part of procedures, protocols and methods of working, but is also an integral part of every individual. 'You cannot transfer safety awareness, but you can make people aware of it. This way we are able to ensure that working in high voltage installations stays safe.'

Culture is personal

Marjolein de Gorter-Manhoudt (Director LPN), Frank Wester, (Associate Director GFO-N) and Richard Gort (Director GFO and interim Director Safety) continued the opening remarks with the common message that, as partners, we must share concerns and challenges together.

Marjolein: 'What can we do for the safety of people in the field who are responsible for project implementation? Meaningful discussion is part of partnership, because that is how we can look after our people and their safety.'

Frank: 'Safety awareness has increased tremendously over the past year. The efforts we are collectively making in this respect are enormously appreciated. Every incident is one too many. Here I am not talking about statistics, but about people. We would like to understand what you are running up against. We would like to engage you in a dialogue to understand how we can take the next step together.'

Richard emphasised that safety is personal and that it has a personal value for him. What does effective partnership mean and what is needed for

this? A personal relationship means excellent cooperation. 'Safety is personal because it enables us to connect with the people on the work floor. Together, we are not only responsible for creating the conditions that are necessary for our people to be able to work safely, we are also responsible for convincing everyone to be willing to work safely. The difference is 'compliance', you do it because you are told to do it, and 'discipline', I do it because I want to, even when no one is looking. When people are willing, you can make the difference together; this is when we speak about culture and culture is personal.'

The opening remarks were followed by a session in which personal reflection was key. Three Senior Leaders gave an introductory presentation to be able to start up a dialogue together about one's own role, making safety personal.

Context is needed to work safely

Bart Smolders, Director Infra Heijmans, showed a brief segment from the Volvo Ocean Race, and spoke about safety and leadership. How did things go wrong in this race? Three errors were made: in the work preparations, the team went out with inferior tools and the team deviated from the





accepted working methods. ‘When you apply this story to our business you will see that for good reasons PUA (Planned Unavailability) is changed at the last minute. My concern here is about undesirable loyalty. In my experience, I see that when schedules are shifted, teams still try do the work anyway. We will have to mutually understand how we determine what the limit is and how well prepared our teams are. How do we ensure that the context within the chain is in order and that our people come home safely every day?’

Safety: it’s simple, but not easy.

In her presentation, Melanie Nissink, TenneT Head LPN Area Central, spoke about taking responsibility in case of incidents. ‘An incident is not an independent occurrence, but is generally an accumulation of the decisions we make as things happen. How did this come about and what can I do about it? Safety: it’s simple, but not easy.’ Sometimes it is an accident that no one was able to prevent, no matter how severe the consequences. Our responsibility lies in the aftercare of the family, friends and colleagues. The consequences of an incident are sometimes difficult to accept for the involved parties and people then look for someone to blame, the cause or the perpetrator.

‘We can learn together and listen to each other without judgment and with compassion. Take time for each other, including for moments that are important to someone else. Take care and responsibility in everything you do; dare to make a contribution, dare to hold others accountable and especially dare to set limits. In every decision we make, in every step we take, you will want to make a good contribution to safety during the design phases and the construction phases for



Melanie Nissink



Bart Smolders

yourself and your colleagues.

Safety: it’s simple, but not easy! What do you do?’

Self-healing teams

Adam Middleton, Vice President Western Europe Siemens Energy, shared a personal story about self-healing teams and the inconvenient truth. Every day we are confronted with incidents that go wrong and that we need to do something about.

What is the current reality: post-Covid, rising work pressures, reorganisation, energy transition and, at the end of the day, things are uncertain, complex and unclear. This means that there are people in our organisation who feel this and that it influences their work performance. How do you spot when a colleague is mentally absent? How do you create a culture in which people are not afraid to speak up when something is not OK? How inviting are we towards one another? How can we help each other? The solution would appear to be obvious: trust one another, be honest about how you feel, and share what you would like to share. Be aware the current reality is not going to change: ‘headquarters is not coming to save you.’ When you are OK, you can also look after others. *How do you feel?*



Adam Middleton





After lunch, Manon and Maarten walked around the room to have a face-to-face discussion with partners during which you could ask each other anything. Some very interesting issues emerged from this, which were followed up on in the breakout sessions. Subdivided into seven groups, participants in two rounds discussed topics such as safety culture, rules and learning potential, taking care of each other and safety in the chain. The summary of the breakout session is compiled in the Harvest report.

How my energy can make the difference

At the end of the afternoon, Manon shared her thoughts about where we can make the difference. 'How am I going to share the contents of the discussions at my workplace? Approach your people in the workplace and engage them in discussion. It requires little effort, but has a major impact.

What do you do when no one is looking? The difference between 'compliance' and 'discipline' emerges when we make the culture personal. When people are willing, you can make the difference together.



Safety is about planning, making preparations and about how you provide leadership and support at any given moment. It's all about loyalty and appreciation, and how we halt undesirable loyalty together. Do not change the context, but let's ensure that everyone feels safe.

Safety is not a standalone, it is always part of the whole. It is up to us as leaders to see this connection as a central theme in which we find common ground and connect together. Allow for topics to be discussed and be open to self-reflection. It's about sharing what you have learned and identifying what is being felt and what is not being communicated. What are you going to do to enhance this within your organisation?'

'What I also like to mention is trust. Safety is trust. You are partners and the point of trust is that it is something you must give first before you can receive it in return. I would like to give you trust as partners of TenneT and hope that this is mutual, and that together we can and will move up to the next safety level because **Safety needs our energy.**'

