

Surrounded by warning signs?

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The two photographs on the right were taken at an airport. The device is a personnel lift (elevator), used to raise workers to a task. There are 24 warning labels on this platform. How many do you think the operator reads? No doubt all these warning signs have their point and serve a good purpose. But, one may wonder if so many warnings are actually distracting, or so overwhelming that nobody pays attention to them.

Do we ever get overloaded with communications? Yes! In the process industries it could be that warning sign that you walk by and don't bother to read, or the caution in a procedure that you don't notice.



Did you know?

- Warning signs are posted to remind people about specific equipment and process hazards in an area.
- Warning signs may also specify things that cannot be safely done in a process area or with a piece of equipment.
- Signs in a process area often list requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety information. Warnings and PPE requirements may also be included in operating and maintenance procedures, or in work permit documents.
- If there are too many signs or procedure warnings, some may be overlooked and an incident may occur.

What can you do?

- Always read the warning signs before entering a process area or using a piece of equipment, to remind yourself of what should be done, and also of what should not be done.
- Read and understand the safety and PPE requirements in operating procedures, maintenance procedures, or work permit documents. Follow these requirements, and ask for help from your supervisor if you do not understand the requirements.
- If you think that a written procedure or a signboard contains too many warnings which may distract readers from what is essential, report this to your supervisor.
- Are signs in the right places and in the right number? Are they effective reminders? Are the signs accurate?
- Suggest opportunities to improve warning signs or warnings in procedures. For example, there are 24 warning labels for the platform in the picture above. Could some of these 24 warning labels be combined? Grouped? Prioritized? Are they all necessary?
- Read the May 2013 *Beacon* for more examples of poor signs.

We need warning signs – and they must be to the point!