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New Confined Space Technology First in Canada

By Seema Dhawan

A NEW TECHNOLOGY THAT monitors confined spaces with the use of cameras and an integrated software system was launched at the Global Petroleum Show on Tuesday. The TeQ™ Shield System by United Safety allows a safety operator to monitor all confined spaces and gas levels from the control centre.

"It's very exciting, and it's great to assist our customers in executing these critical tasks," said Lee Whittaker, CEO of United Safety, at the launch.

"We're really really pleased, we think this is going to make a difference," he added.

The technology enables communication to personnel inside and outside the vessel, making emergency response times faster. This is the first time the technology is being used in Canada.

"TeQ™ Shield is an established technology that's been used in Europe for just about ten years now," says Tim Wallace, Executive Vice President at United Safety, in an interview.

"The TeQ™ Shield provides the safety operator with a solution that combines gas detection, video surveillance, two-way communication, access control and a command center to effectively monitor confined spaces, improving safety without delaying projects or increasing costs," said Shayne McCallum, Vice President, Canada for United Safety, in a media release.

Unique features include cameras that have day and night vision, and video and data recording that can be used for investigations and training.

The end result of the integrated system is that you have a much safer environment, Wallace says.

"[The] technologies are all working together to make a turnaround more efficient and more safe," says Wallace.

"It can speed trouble-shooting and help with efficiencies," he adds.

The system is also compatible with drone technology and can monitor an employee's heart rate and body temperature.

Right to left: Elie Daher, EVP & CMO, Lee Whittaker, CEO, Shayne McCallum, VP North America and Tim Wallace, EVP

It's the next step in ensuring employee safety, says Wallace, with the help of bio-monitoring combined with the tracking of the temperature inside the vessel.

"Normally our employees are saying they're ok but you actually have health and technology that's being monitored," says Wallace.

"It's a trend we've seen in the industry, where to ensure employees are safe you're looking more and more at the data."

The data can also be used for research health and safety research in the future, as gas readings are connected to the time clock, allowing researchers to trace back who was present in the vessel at any given time.

The system is also capable of supporting drone technology, which can be used for environmental monitoring and video surveillance.

"I think the overall software system that drives the system is probably the most unique," says Wallace.

"It's really one of the driving technologies that makes the system work for our customers."

Additional enhancements include remote connectivity and surveillance, the use of body cameras to record visual input on individual worker's surroundings, and remote connectivity.

The technology can also reduce cost during a turnaround, as fewer people are needed to monitor vessel exits. "It meets the intent of legal requirements for confined space," says Wallace. "This removes a significant number of people that potentially people wouldn't have to have during the turnaround," he adds.

Allowing technology to assist in the monitoring of confined spaces also means lower hotel and travel costs.

"Ultimately if you were to make the overall turnaround one or two per cent more efficient than it was there is a significant cost difference to be realized," says Wallace.