

Title	<b>Healthy Workplaces Campaign guide. A European campaign on safe maintenance 2010-2011</b>
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Source	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
Pub Date	2010
Brief Introduction	 <p><b>INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS MAINTENANCE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?</b></p> <p><b>● The cost of poorly co-ordinated maintenance: the Piper Alpha disaster</b></p> <p>On a July day in 1988, newsrooms around the world showed images of devastation, as an oil rig turned into a fireball. Flammable gas had ignited on the Piper Alpha platform in the North Sea, turning it within seconds into an inferno. In one of the worst incidents of its kind in history, 167 workers were killed.</p> <p>What caused this terrible event? Condensate escaped when an attempt was made to bring a condensate pump, out for maintenance, back on line quickly, following the failure of the in-service pump. The condensate flashed off, found an ignition source, and caused an explosion, which ultimately lead to the disaster. The incident was put down to a failure in the permit to work and associated isolation systems. Both of which are critical to ensuring maintenance can be carried out safely.</p> <p>Piper Alpha is an extreme example but it shows how without proper co-ordination of the maintenance process the results can be catastrophic. In every industry sector, throughout the EU, similar stories could be told: accidents and ill health resulting not from 'acts of God,' but because safety and health aspects were not considered when maintenance activities were being planned, or because proper maintenance had not been carried out, sometimes months or even years before. The sequence of events may not always be easy to trace, but in many, many cases, accidents and ill health in the workplace happen because adequate risk assessment hasn't been carried out, or because maintenance has been overlooked.</p>