

'Companies must budget and plan long term for continued cyber security management'



Neil Crompton, Functional Safety Specialist, responded to a few questions posed by **Industrial Automation** for this e-Interview.

As a veteran in the domain of functional safety, what are the common weak links in plant safety you have observed?

Poor design, poor understanding of control logic, poor understanding of maintenance requirements to maintain target integrity level all add up to holes in safety management that as a minimum introduce increased costs and at their worst lead to life threatening incidents.

Has technology made things easy or increased safety or is it breeding certain complacency?

I wouldn't say easy but would agree with complacency part. We need to maintain a competent safety workforce, who understands both risk and design in order to offset potential threats, and technology plays a part, but it is a partnership.

How does SLM help in enhancing plant safety? What is the USP of SLM?

90% of the safety lifecycle is spent within

the operational phase. In order to know precisely how close to the target SIL we are performing we must be able to monitor the performance of plant, operations and maintenance. The analysis that SLM brings allows you to accurately plan maintenance reducing costs whilst proving that reduced maintenance is justified

In one of your articles you have hinted at penny pinching as one of the obstacles in plant safety. How rampant is this?

Reducing project costs is still very common because lifecycle costs and savings are poorly understood if actually considered at all. Reducing design budgets can cost many multiples across twenty year operations. One unplanned shutdown could cost more than six months of project budget.



The age of IIoT has helped improve efficiencies but also opened plants to other risks like cyber attacks. Are these risks adequately addressed?

No, I don't think so. Companies must budget and plan long term for continued

cyber security management. We are only just scraping the surface of what IIoT is capable of. There are some really exciting developments but unfortunately engineering is a very conservative industry and may take many years to adopt the technology.

How can organisations be better equipped to face the growing threat of cyber attacks?

Admit that you are not experts and bring in specialist assistance. The threat is real!

Have you done any work in India? Do you have presence in this market?

No, and yet many Indian companies have shown a real commitment to safety. The next step is to automate the safety lifecycle to allow a consistent and cost effective approach.

Neil Crompton, Functional Safety Specialist, is Director, AIM Lifecycle Services, UK. AIM is the exclusive distributor and reseller of Mangan Software Solutions, SLM safety lifecycle management software. This software that is used by many of the Super Majors in the States is now available to safety professionals and operators in the UK and Europe.

Integrating SLM safety lifecycle management software with customers business and automation layers saves man-hours, prevents unplanned outages, instructs and reports on the safe and continuous operation of the asset, providing on line safety level evidence via dashboards and alerts.