



The findings of industry-wide research into gas detection in the workplace were recently announced, revealing a number of alarming gas safety concerns. The research demonstrated the lack of confidence in their current gas detection systems amongst the higher level within an organisation – only 32% of managers are very confident that the gas detectors in their workplace actually work. Additionally, despite the fact that frequency of gas detectors testing was ranked as the most important factor in ensuring workplace safety, only two in five managers believe that their gas detectors are not tested regularly enough. The research therefore reveals a lack of consistency regarding what constitutes a reliable gas detection set-up.

The research, carried out by third party researchers, was commissioned by the specialist electrochemical-sensor manufacturer Analytical Technology Inc (UK) in response to expressed concerns in the water/utility industry about methods of safe gas detection. A total of 100 people were interviewed working in six different industries, namely food and beverage manufacturing, pharmaceutical manufacturing, petrochemical, water/utility, metal plating/printed circuit board manufacturing and healthcare. Within these industries the employees interviewed were from a range of job titles at managerial level (plant and facility managers, project managers and health and safety managers) and at workforce level (factory/shop floor workers, engineers, machine operators, instrument technicians/engineers and service engineers).

The research focuses on three main areas of interest – current awareness and concerns around gas detection, the purchasing of gas detectors and factors influencing it, and the testing of gas detectors. Managerial staff and their workforce express different opinions across a number of important issues. When asked about the procedure if all the gas detectors in a plant failed, alarmingly almost a quarter of managers would carry on as normal. In stark contrast, only 8% of their workforce would continue in the potentially dangerous working environment. While 80% of factory/plant workers are concerned about the risks that gas poses in their workplace, they are in many cases unaware if there are gas detectors in place to ensure their safety. This highlights a clear need for procedures to be put in place to enable protection of workforces and compliance with industry regulations.

The AutoTest function, which automatically checks that a gas detector is working correctly, has been identified as a necessary characteristic of a reliable gas detection set-up, and 89% of those currently working with AutoTest detectors in place claim that they would never use a system without this function. Gas detector testing differs dramatically from company to company due to the lack of explicit regulation in this area and although frequent gas detection is proven to improve confidence in gas detection set-ups, around one in eight managers manually test their detectors less frequently than annually.

Michael Strahand, General Manager Europe of Analytical Technology, decided that the research was a necessary step to highlight the risks posed by gas in the workplace. He states "In order to minimise risks and ensure safety in the workplace, it is necessary to implement reliable gas detection systems with the ability to automatically test themselves to ensure they are working. These devices can measure and monitor harmful levels of gas, providing early warning of gas escapes and allowing for timely remedial or protective actions to be undertaken. The research allows us to get an insight into the most important issues in the industry and enables us to tackle these with our AutoTest monitoring technology".