



Industry: Oil & Gas/Lubricants Manufacturing

Shell Lubricants Enhances Safety Communications with Walt Smart Radio

"We tried three different products before we settled with Weavix... This is probably the best option. The feedback I've gotten has been mainly positive. Everyone loves to be able to talk to one person... They are hesitant to talk on the radio because they don't want everyone to hear the conversation. So now being able to have that one-on-one, they use it a lot more."



Gary Blackburn

HSSE Advisor at Shell Lubricants



Business Challenge

When Shell acquired a lubricants manufacturing facility in California, they faced significant communication challenges that needed immediate solutions. The plant had inherited what Gary Blackburn, HSSE Advisor, called a "*Frankenstein system*" of communications:

- A mishmash of different radio types (LMR, Motorola, Hitachi, and Kenwood)
- Equipment interference causing communication failures
- Poor connectivity between departments
- Non-functioning repeaters
- Inadequate battery life that couldn't last a full shift
- No dedicated system for safety alerts or emergencies

The facility operates with a significant Spanish-speaking workforce (approximately 60%) and runs multiple shifts with plans to expand to 24/7 operations. In this Class One, Division Two hazardous environment, reliable communication is essential for safety and operational efficiency.

Why They Chose Walt Smart Radio System

Shell's journey to Walt wasn't immediate. The team initially tried other, less expensive communication solutions, but encountered persistent problems:

"We tried one, didn't work. Tried a second one and it worked half the time. We tried one and the customer service was terrible," recalls Blackburn.

After these disappointing experiences, Blackburn returned to Weavix, impressed by the comprehensive feature set that the Walt smart radio offered:

- **Carrier flexibility:** "A great thing is you could switch the carrier. So in some areas the carrier works better—in here for us, Verizon is better."
- **One-to-one communication:** "Everyone loves to be able to talk to one person... being able to have that one-on-one, they use it a lot more."
- **Photo-sharing capability:** Essential for remote assessment of situations
- **Multi-functionality:** "We have one device that has all that—picture taking, flashlight, and communication."
- **Language support:** Important for their bilingual workforce
- **Full-shift battery life:** Reliable power throughout work periods
- **Robust location services:** Critical for tracking team members' safety

The Solution

The implementation of Walt smart radio systems provided Shell with an enterprise-grade communication platform that addressed their specific needs:

- **25 Walt smart radios** deployed across the facility
- **Carrier switched from AT&T to Verizon** for optimal coverage
- **Multiple communication channels** created for different teams and functions
- **Direct messaging capabilities** enabled for private conversations
- **Emergency protocols** established using the SOS feature
- **Mobile app integration** for management to stay connected remotely



The system's flexibility allowed for customization to Shell's specific environment, including accommodating their Class One, Division Two hazardous area requirements.

The Results

The implementation of Walt Smart Radio has delivered significant improvements for Shell's operation:

- **Enhanced Emergency Response:** "We had a spill here... They were able to use their Weavix device, take a picture of it. 'Cause I wanted to see it... We were able to not send out a major report by taking a photo... That saved us probably at least an hour."
- **Improved Communication Efficiency:** Workers who were previously hesitant to communicate on open channels now use the system more frequently due to private messaging options.
- **Executive Recognition:** "My boss, which is the head of safety for North America... loves the product and she's like, 'man, we should get those at all of our facilities.'"
- **Cross-facility Interest:** "When we get visitors here from other Shell facilities, they see this thing on my hip and they're intrigued by it."
- **Expansion Potential:** Blackburn plans to showcase Walt at an upcoming meeting on improving HSSE within Shell North America.
- **Remote Management Capabilities:** "Some days I work from home... I can be part of the conversation when guys need to reach out to me and they don't have to call me. They can just push to talk."

Key Use Cases

Emergency Assessment: The photo-sharing capability allows for remote assessment of situations, enabling management to make informed decisions without delay.

Multi-language Support: With approximately 60% Spanish-speaking employees, the language translation features support effective communication across the workforce.

Remote Management: Management can stay connected through the mobile app even when off-site, maintaining operational oversight.

One-to-One Communication: Private messaging encourages more frequent and candid communication between team members.

Location Tracking: Safety monitoring for personnel working in isolated areas of the facility, especially during skeleton crew operations.

Highlighted Elements

Competitive Advantage:

"The flashlight feature is great because some of our areas are pretty dark and we have to supply flashlights... We have one device that has all that—picture taking, flashlight, and communication."

Executive Endorsement:

"My boss, which is the head of safety for North America... loves the product and is sharing it in operations meetings for North America."

Future Expansion:

"My hopes is we get this everywhere."



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