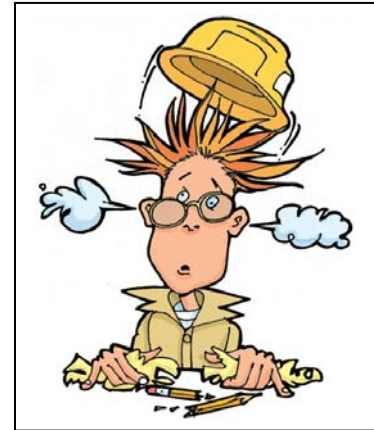


PRESSURE

Pressure is an important factor in the safe operation of pipelines and process industries. Pressure is necessary for flow. Pipeliners want to achieve optimal flow. This requires the right amount of pressure and controls on the pressure so it does not exceed maximum limits. A pipeline system has devices that transmit, monitor, control, and adjust pressure. There are even devices that are designed to shut down the system and relieve pressure if it gets above the safe settings. These safety devices are often called “fail-safe” devices. People are learning, from the Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Oil Spill, what happens when a fail-safe device fails. The pressure is difficult to control and can cause significant damage.

Pressure on people can also cause damage. The effects of pressure on people differ. Pressure to perform can be good and bad. The correct amount and the right types of pressure help people achieve optimal performance. It is when we reach our limits that pressure can have negative effects. Although the brain and body provide warning signals, people will ignore the signals for many reasons. Our systems may not shut down until there is a catastrophic failure. People do not have fail-safe devices. The results could negatively affect our health. Therefore, it is important to understand both the causes and effects of pressure. Avoid this insidious “Dirty Dozen” factor.



Self-Imposed

Imposed by Others

Pressure may be self-imposed or imposed by others. I always think about the saying of the cartoon possum, [Pogo](#), who famously said, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” Think about the different types of pressure you might impose on yourself. In my family life, I desire to be an excellent husband, father, grandfather, son, father-in-law, brother, son-in-law, nephew, cousin. In my personal life, I want to be an excellent disciple, citizen, friend, and the list can go on and on. We all have professional and personal roles and goals that are important to us. It is beneficial to challenge our limits, but we need to recognize that limits exist. When I work shiftwork and neglect sleep for an event I deem important, this decision can cause me to be less alert. Personal pressure, even if it is based on good intent, can be harmful. Don’t be your own worst enemy. Discuss with your family the importance of setting priorities, based on what is truly valuable.

It is easier to recognize pressure imposed by others. The responsibilities of work come with inherent pressures. Look at actual job postings for pipeline controllers. People who want to work in this position know the job requires:

- Must possess the ability to **handle multiple tasks** and stress in a **fast-paced** business environment.
- **Flawless** operation of automated systems and the ability to **remain focused** in highly stressful situations.
- Must have the ability to work in a fast paced environment, **process work rapidly**, set priorities, **work under pressure**.

Consider these ways to avoid the effects on pressure:

- Prioritize. When we are faced with several tasks, choose the most critical and delay others.
- Plan ahead. Use planning and time management skills on each shift and for each set of work days.
- Learn your limits. Our mental and physical limits are real. These will affect how we act and react to pressure.
- Set realistic goals and expectations for yourself and others. Safety should be the ultimate concern.
- Do not pressure others or yourself to exceed safe limits.
- Do not create a false sense of urgency.
- Communicates your concerns, early in the process before pressure becomes a concern.
- Ask for help. Asking is difficult for some of us, but others are willing to help prevent errors and accidents.