



# Standardising and Simplifying Incident Investigation at Syngenta

## Kelvin TOP-SET - A Case Study

Image courtesy of Syngenta

*Syngenta, a leading global agriculture and agrochemical company concerned with the improvement of global food security is using the Kelvin TOP-SET system to help to standardise and simplify its incident investigation procedures. Graeme Gunn, APAC HSES Lead at Syngenta Asia Pacific, explains here how the system is being implemented.*

- Syngenta currently has 3 in-company Kelvin TOP-SET tutors in APAC
- In APAC alone over 100 people have been trained in the use of the Kelvin TOP-SET system
- In 2015 there were 4 Kelvin TOP-SET courses run by internal tutors
- Many other employees attended Kelvin TOP-SET “open” courses around the globe

### 1. How would you sum up your experience so far with Kelvin TOP-SET?

I have been using the Kelvin TOP-SET incident investigation methodology within Syngenta for several years now. I like the system and the tools, they are well put together and the materials provided are top quality. The courses teach delegates how to really get to the heart of the matter when conducting an investigation. I personally enjoy using TOP-SET and see this as the best way to successfully carry out high level Root Cause Analysis for serious incidents. At Syngenta we do not currently use the TOP-SET system for our lower potential incidents. In terms of results, we are seeing an improvement in the quality of the analysis of incidents across 2 of our 4 regions – APEC and EAME – these are the regions where we are currently implementing the TOP-SET system.

### 2. How you have integrated TOP-SET into the organisation?

We have a global incident investigation format (an e-system for logging incidents and following through with a Root Cause information tracking system) which has made it challenging to implement Kelvin TOP-SET as an additional system. We have managed to overcome this by emphasizing that by attending TOP-SET courses and embracing the system we are raising our game. We as a company are becoming more skilled at identifying serious incidents and are generating more consistent and better quality output in our investigation of these incidents. This standardisation of the quality of investigation output helps us further as our people are now more confident in the neutrality and quality of the details and are more prepared to share information and insights openly. Senior management has bought into the system and we are using a top-down approach. We also believe that there is always a need to invest in further training and education of employees and we recognise the value in continuing to invest in Kelvin TOP-SET courses.

### 3. How has TOP-SET been received by your team?

The Kelvin TOP-SET courses and investigation system have been received enthusiastically across the business and the feedback is very positive. Due to its simplicity, we have found that the TOP-SET system travels well across cultures and can be understood easily by teams who operate predominantly in languages other than English. We are still experiencing some cultural problems where people want to jump straight to the Root Cause Analysis and don't want to take the time to conduct the investigation in full and gather all of the relevant data. It will take time to change attitudes. The company is recognising that a mindset shift to risk management and leadership is a necessary development in order to promote continuous improvement in incident investigation, with risk management sitting at the front end of this.

One of the issues that we still experience is that people may not wish to reveal the real Root Causes of an incident and they are afraid to “ruffle management feathers” – they may well recognise that there is a need to take action but they are sometimes reluctant to take the hard decision to act to rectify the situation.

### 4. What tangible results you have seen?

In a nutshell I would say the top 3 tangible results that we have seen from using Kelvin TOP-SET would be:

- **Improved incident investigation**
- **Better quality of decision making**
- **More willingness to share information as the investigation output is known to be of good quality**

It is also important to note that we, at Syngenta, started with the view that the Kelvin TOP-SET system was an HSE tool; it is, but it also adds value in quality management, process management and numerous other business applications.



***“The TOP-SET system is based on a clear methodology; it is simple to understand and easy to use correctly.”***

### 5. What are your thoughts on how effective incident investigation may be able to help companies achieve their aims and objectives?

I would highly recommend the use of a robust incident investigation system such as Kelvin TOP-SET to others. The TOP-SET system is based on a clear methodology; it is simple to understand and easy to use correctly. I believe that companies should rely on quality tools to make quality decisions. One caveat would be that no matter what the system, it still requires time and effort to identify and pinpoint good quality information in any investigation. There is no shortcut to good answers. Good investigation requires good application of the system.