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INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY FOR HYDROGEN SULFIDE AT HIGH-RISK OIL AND GAS FACILITIES

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ABSTRACT

There is no greater occupational or process safety hazard in the oil and gas sector than hydrogen sulfide (H₂S). Its combination of toxicity, flammability, and corrosiveness makes it a prime candidate for catastrophic accidents. From exploration and drilling to the processing, storage and transportation of hydrocarbons, H₂S puts workers, assets and the environment at considerable risk. Yet even with better technology and more robust regulations in place, we still see our share of incidents. This is often down to a lack of effective emergency planning, poor monitoring, and safety practices that are too fragmented to be of much use. What is needed now is an approach that is both comprehensive and integrated to deal with the many facets of H₂S risk over the life of a high-risk facility. To that end, this study puts forward an integrated risk management methodology for the kind of environments where H₂S hazards are most acute. We have designed a framework to improve how these hazards are prevented, detected, and controlled by unifying several elements: process safety management principles, hazard identification, quantitative and qualitative assessment, barrier management, and emergency response. The idea is to layer protection through a mix of engineering and administrative controls, real-time monitoring and a strong safety culture. Our framework is built on systematic hazard identification – employing HIRA, HAZOP and FMEA as well as risk ranking – but it also brings in digital tools and predictive management to spot emerging risks before they become problems. By developing workforce competency and integrating advanced monitoring with safety-critical barriers, the methodology is intended to make an organization more resilient and better able to make sound decisions when things go wrong. What our findings show is that you get far better hazard visibility and operational safety from an integrated system than from the conventional, piecemeal way of doing things. A structured link between risk assessment, preventive measures and emergency response can go a long way toward lessening the chance and impact of an H₂S incident. In short, the methodology we propose is a practical, scalable means of ensuring sustainable operations and higher safety standards in the field.

KEYWORDS: Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S); Process Safety Management; Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment; Integrated Risk Management; Oil and Gas Facilities; Emergency Response Planning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mechanism of diffused water through the surface of archaeological Obsidian blades, a mainly temperature-dependent and concentration-driven phenomenon, related to the obsidian hydration dating (OHD), is a subject of ongoing development¹.

Diffusion is an essential transport in many rock and biological systems and is known to be susceptible to environmental and intrinsic structure and inhomogeneity. The most basic definition of diffusion is that it presumes a homogeneous environment with a continuously increasing mean squared displacement and a Gaussian distribution of particle displacements.

1.1 Background of Hydrogen Sulfide Hazards in Oil and Gas Facilities

There is no disputing that the oil and gas industry is among the world's most hazardous industrial sectors. The sheer volume of toxic, flammable, and high-pressure substances on site presents a considerable risk to the environment, infrastructure, and the people who work there. Of all the hazards one might face, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) is perhaps the most pressing safety concern. Its mix of acute toxicity, corrosiveness, and flammability means it can be the catalyst for a catastrophic incident in short order. A naturally occurring gas in sour reservoirs, H₂S is a common companion to everything from exploration and drilling to the processing, storage and maintenance that make up the petroleum value chain (Didik Mustakim et al., 2025).

The danger of H₂S is compounded by the fact that it is colourless and can build up to lethal levels in any confined or ill-ventilated space. While at low concentrations, you will detect its tell-tale rotten-egg smell, but do not rely on your nose; prolonged exposure paralyzes the olfactory nerves. At higher concentrations, the consequences are swift: respiratory paralysis, unconsciousness, severe neurological harm, or death in minutes. For this reason, H₂S has long been cited as a top cause of fatal occupational accidents in hydrocarbon processing (Özmen & Aksoy, 2015; Didik Mustakim et al., 2025).

Then there is the matter of operational complexity. Today's facilities are a web of highly interconnected process units, automated controls, and sophisticated equipment running at extreme pressures and temperatures. In such an environment, an H₂S release does not stay put; it can spread across several operational zones with cascading effects on production, reputation and personnel. These

challenges are only magnified by ageing assets, remote locations, and our growing reliance on digital technology to run things (Wanasinghe et al., 2021).

H₂S is not just a human health problem; it is a threat to the integrity of your assets. Sulfur compounds will corrode and degrade materials over time, leading to sulfide stress cracking and equipment failure. This raises the odds of a containment loss, fire, or explosion. You cannot treat H₂S risk management as an occupational health matter alone; it has to be part of a broader strategy for asset integrity and environmental protection (Redutskiy et al., 2021).

We have learned from past industrial disasters that catastrophe seldom comes from a single technical glitch. More often, it is the result of a confluence of human error, poor communication, organizational failings, and weak risk governance. This has given rise to Process Safety Management (PSM) systems, which over the last twenty years have become the bedrock of industrial safety, offering a way to systematically monitor and control hazards (Kwon, 2006; Mohd Shariff et al., 2016; Krishna & Thirumalainathan, 2022).

Yet for all the progress, many organisations still find it hard to get on top of a hazard like H₂S. Safety programmes are too often siloed between departments, leaving you with inconsistent emergency plans and a disconnect between what is done on the ground and strategic decisions. There is a growing consensus that we need to move beyond these conventional methods to something more integrated (Macrae, 2025; Vella Bonanno et al., 2025).

Modern safety philosophies are putting greater stock in a holistic view of risk control – one that unifies hazard identification, workforce competence, emergency readiness and continuous improvement under a single architecture. With H₂S, the success of any one control measure is contingent on how well it works with the rest of your safeguards (Barkhatov et al., 2022). It is therefore essential to develop a methodology that can bring these disparate elements together in a coherent framework if we are to improve safety and resilience in our facilities.

1.2. Problem Statement

You would think that with the money put into safety tech and regulatory compliance, H₂S incidents would be a thing of the past. But they persist in every corner of the global oil and gas business. The fact remains that current practices are not up to the task of dealing with the dynamic risks H₂S poses. Even

¹ FootNote here.

where established process safety tools are in use, their utility is hampered by a lack of integration and a fragmented approach.

What is lacking in traditional safety management is the recognition that risk activities should not be seen as standalone processes but as parts of a whole. It is not uncommon for hazard identification to be done in isolation from operational planning, or for monitoring systems to function on their own apart from emergency response programmes. In some instances, the lessons an organization has gleaned from past incidents are not made part of any systematic risk assessment going forward. Nwankwo et al. (2020) note that this kind of fragmentation breeds information silos, which in turn can blunt organizational awareness and make it harder to make sound decisions, whether conditions are routine or otherwise.

Then there is the matter of conventional risk assessment. Methods like Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), HAZOP studies, or FMEA are certainly useful for spotting vulnerabilities, but they tend to be periodic in nature rather than a form of continuous monitoring. How well they work is contingent on how their results are woven into the day-to-day operations and the learning culture of the company (Suhardi et al., 2018; Albar et al., 2022). All too often, the output of these assessments is little more than a static document, failing to serve as the dynamic tool for proactive management it should be.

Managing safety-critical barriers is another area of difficulty. You need several layers of defence to have effective H₂S protection: engineering controls, gas detection, ventilation, emergency shutdowns, PPE, and so on. If one barrier gives way, especially in concert with other shortcomings, the whole system becomes more vulnerable. As Barkhatov and colleagues (2022) have pointed out, these should be viewed as part of an integrated risk management effort, not just as standalone technical fixes.

Digitalization is changing the landscape of industrial operations, presenting its own set of challenges and possibilities for H₂S risk management. Even though you have access to IIoT technologies, predictive analytics, and real-time sensors that give you better visibility of risk, many firms have not yet found a way to make them part of their safety management framework (Wanasinghe et al., 2021). This leaves much to be desired in terms of proactive prevention.

Taken together, these issues point to the case for a more unified methodology for H₂S management in high-risk oil and gas facilities, one that ties together everything from hazard ID and monitoring to

emergency preparedness and organizational learning.

1.3. Research Aim and Objectives

What we set out to do in this study is put forward an integrated risk management methodology for the high-risk oil and gas sector that does a better job of preventing, controlling, and continuously managing hydrogen sulfide hazards.

We have set the following objectives to see this through:

1. A critical look at where hydrogen sulfide hazards come from in oil and gas operations and what the consequences are.
2. An evaluation of the process safety management and risk assessment techniques currently in use for H₂S.
3. Pinpointing where conventional approaches to risk control and emergency readiness fall short.
4. The creation of a framework that is truly comprehensive, bringing together the technical, operational, and emergency response sides of things.
5. Putting in place mechanisms to bring safety barriers and monitoring tech under the umbrella of H₂S risk governance.
6. Assessing how the proposed methodology would stand up in practice and what benefits it might bring in terms of compliance and safety performance.

1.4. Scope and Significance of the Study

The scope of our work is confined to hydrogen sulfide risk in high-risk facilities across the board – from upstream exploration and midstream transport to downstream processing and storage where exposure is a possibility. We are looking at both the normal course of business and abnormal situations such as equipment failure or an accidental release.

There is more to the significance of this research than standard occupational health and safety. By unifying risk assessment, barrier concepts, and emergency strategy into one framework, we hope to move modern industrial risk management forward and close the distance between theory and what is required on the ground. For the operator, engineer, or regulator, the framework provides a way to be more resilient and allocate resources with greater effect. It is in line with the sort of resilience engineering and integrated safety systems that Yoon et al. (2024) and others have been writing about (Macrae, 2025; Vella Bonanno et al., 2025).

2. STRUCTURE OF THE ARTICLE

You will find the article laid out in five sections that build on one another to present our integrated methodology. After this introduction, Section 2 gets into the risk landscape of hydrogen sulfide and the techniques for identifying it. In Section 3, we put forward the proposed framework and talk about its foundations and components. Section 4 is concerned with the practicalities of deployment and the technology that makes it possible. We conclude in Section 5 with an evaluation of the methodology's merits and limitations, and some thoughts on where future research might go.

2.1. *The Nature and Behaviour of Hydrogen Sulfide*

There is no more dangerous toxic gas in the oil and gas sector than hydrogen sulfide (H_2S). It is a prime cause of occupational deaths from toxic exposure. You will find this gas in abundance in the industry; it is a natural component of many hydrocarbon reservoirs and is common in sour crude, natural gas deposits, production fluids, and refining operations, as well as in sulfur recovery units and wastewater treatment. Its presence is felt from upstream to downstream, which is why H_2S has been such a thorn in the side of safety managers and a threat to operational reliability (Didik Mustakim et al., 2025).

What makes H_2S such a formidable hazard is the way its toxicological and physical traits combine with its operational realities. Where other workplace hazards might be confined to certain activities, H_2S can put human health, process integrity and even business continuity at risk all at once. Taming it calls for an interdisciplinary approach that brings together everything from risk engineering and emergency management to organizational governance.

Physically speaking, H_2S is a colourless gas with a molecular weight of some 34.08 g/mol, so it is denser than the air around it. If released, the gas will tend to sink and pool in low-lying ground, trenches, underground or confined spaces, and any process area with poor ventilation. This creates a high risk of concentrated exposure, not least when maintenance crews are on hand or an emergency is being dealt with.

Once an accidental release occurs, the environment dictates how the H_2S will disperse. A host of factors come into play: the wind, terrain, humidity, temperature, and the layout of the facility itself. In a stable atmosphere, a cloud of H_2S can put some distance between itself and the source before it is no longer hazardous, meaning the fallout can spill

over into neighbouring sites and communities.

But the most perilous aspect of the gas is its toxicity. H_2S is a chemical asphyxiant; it gets in the way of the body's use of oxygen by inhibiting the cytochrome c oxidase enzymes in the mitochondria and halting oxidative phosphorylation. Even if there is plenty of oxygen in the blood, the cells cannot make use of it, leading to hypoxia (Özmen & Aksoy, 2015).

How bad the physiological toll is depends on how much and how long you are exposed to it. Low levels will give you headaches, nausea, dizziness, and irritation of the eyes and throat. Step up the exposure, and you are looking at respiratory trouble, a loss of coordination, and impaired judgment. At higher concentrations, the consequences are swift: unconsciousness, cardiac arrest, or death. For workers on an oil and gas site, there is often little time to sound the alarm and get out.

Then there is the matter of olfactory fatigue. While everyone knows the rotten-egg smell of H_2S , the olfactory nerves are quickly numbed once you pass a certain threshold. A worker may think the danger has passed because he can no longer smell it, only to find that gas levels are still dangerously high. There is no question that this phenomenon has been a factor in many an industrial fatality, which in turn makes the case for dependable gas detection over any reliance on human senses (Didik Mustakim et al., 2025).

Then there is the matter of flammability. Hydrogen sulfide is not only toxic but also a serious fire hazard. Given its wide flammable range, it can be ignited by the right source under the right circumstances. In a facility with hydrocarbon vapours, an H_2S release can set off complex fire and explosion scenarios that make an accident far more severe. That is why risk management has to look at ignition prevention and fire protection as well as toxic exposure.

H_2S is also corrosive, a major headache for oil and gas operations. It is behind the sulfide stress cracking, pitting corrosion, and hydrogen embrittlement you see in carbon steel and other metals. As these materials degrade, so does their structural integrity, raising the odds of a leak or a loss-of-containment event. Before you know it, you have a secondary incident in the form of a fire or toxic release on your hands (Redutskiy et al., 2021).

This is what makes asset integrity management so critical when dealing with H_2S . Too often, a major accident happens because equipment has been weakened by long-term exposure to a corrosive environment, rendering barriers less effective. For that reason, you will find modern H_2S programmes

are part of a wider risk framework that includes everything from reliability engineering to predictive maintenance and inspection planning.

The very way oil and gas facilities operate tends to heighten these risks. Whether it is a high-pressure production system, an offshore rig, or some remote pipeline network, an accidental release can quickly become a full-blown emergency. Your workforce is put in harm's way during drilling, pigging, vessel cleaning, confined-space work, or even routine maintenance. It demands a constant state of vigilance and several layers of protection.

But digital transformation is opening up new ways to handle H₂S behaviour. With IIoT sensors, digital twins, AI-based risk assessment and real-time monitoring, companies can spot something amiss and act on it before it becomes an incident. These tools are in keeping with the industry's move toward a more human-centred approach and are helping to make safety management more proactive (Wanasinghe et al., 2021).

Ultimately, you cannot manage H₂S with traditional occupational safety practices alone. The hazards are too multifaceted. You need an integrated strategy that brings together engineering controls, process safety, workforce competency, and emergency preparedness in one coherent system. A thorough grasp of the gas's physical and toxicological properties, how it disperses, and what it does to your equipment is essential for any meaningful risk assessment or consequence modelling in a high-risk setting. We will take that as our starting point in the following sections as we look at how to evaluate and prioritise these risks in an industrial context.

2.2 Hazard Identification Techniques

At the heart of any sound risk management strategy is hazard identification, and when it comes to averting accidents from hydrogen sulfide exposure, it is the first and most vital step. In the oil and gas sector, where facilities are often high-risk, you have a combination of complex operations, dangerous substances, and the interplay of human and technical systems that can give rise to hazardous conditions in many ways. For that reason, a systematic approach to hazard identification is called for. It is the only way to get to grips with potential H₂S release points, map out how people might be exposed, and put in place the right controls before an incident happens.

But the value of hazard identification in H₂S management is not just about ticking the regulatory boxes. A well-run process allows an organization to be proactive, spotting flaws in everything from

process design and maintenance programmes to the competency of the workforce and emergency plans. By getting ahead of hazards, you can put protective measures in place that will do much to lessen both the chance of an accident and its severity.

Today's oil and gas sites make use of an array of methodologies, each with its own pros and cons. Since no one method can be expected to cover every eventuality, an integrated risk framework will usually draw on several complementary techniques to ensure nothing is missed. The ones you will see most often are Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), Hazard and Operability Studies (HAZOP), Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA), and What-If Analysis.

2.2.1 Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)

For its practicality and structure, HIRA is perhaps the most common risk management tool in industry. The procedure is straightforward: identify the hazard, estimate the likelihood and consequences, and then determine the risk level to guide your decisions (Alamsyah et al., 2024; Albar et al., 2022).

In the course of an H₂S management programme, HIRA is used to uncover a host of exposure scenarios in both day-to-day and non-routine work. You might be looking at gas given off during drilling or a blowout, a leak in the pipeline, a failed valve, or even issues with equipment corrosion. There are also risks tied to confined-space entry, transportation, maintenance, and emergency shutdowns. Each one is measured for what it could mean for personnel, the environment, and the continuity of operations.

The appeal of HIRA is its flexibility. It works as well for decommissioning as it does for the design and commissioning of a new facility. It also helps with resource allocation by letting you rank hazards. A high-priority risk will be met with engineering or administrative controls and training, whereas something of lesser concern can be left to routine monitoring.

That said, HIRA has its drawbacks. The quality of the assessment is only as good as the data and the expertise of the assessor. When you are dealing with a low-frequency but high-consequence event like a major H₂S release, there is room for subjective judgement to skew the results. For this reason, it is best used in tandem with other analytical methods that can offer more in-depth process insights.

2.2.2 Hazard and Operability Study (HAZOP)

There is little argument that HAZOP is among the most thorough of the hazard identification tools

available to the process industries. Tailor-made for the kind of complex systems found in industrial settings, it offers a way to spot where things have strayed from intended operating conditions and judge the fallout (Suhardi et al., 2018; Salsabila & Andesta, 2024).

The HAZOP approach is quite methodical. Teams will run through process variables like pressure, flow rate, temperature and composition using a set of guidewords – “No,” “More,” “Less,” “Reverse” and so on – to find any deviation from the design. They then put together a multidisciplinary team to look at the causes and put forward corrective action.

This is especially pertinent in H₂S management since a toxic release is often the result of a process going awry rather than a piece of equipment simply breaking down. You may see it stem from abnormal flows, an instrument or control system malfunction, a compressor giving out, or a separator upset. Where other, simpler techniques might zero in on a single item of equipment, the strength of HAZOP is in its capacity to evaluate the whole system and the way its components interact. You could say the systems-oriented view is of particular import when it comes to H₂S management. Accidents in this arena are seldom the result of an isolated incident; more often, they are the product of complex interplay and multiple points of failure.

HAZOP is well suited to this, not least because it fosters a multidisciplinary environment. It brings together engineers, operators, maintenance staff, safety specialists, and those from management to work as one. The value of that kind of collaboration is that it puts a range of operational experience and perspectives into the assessment, which in turn improves hazard recognition.

Then again, HAZOP studies are not without their demands. They can be resource-heavy and call for a good deal of time and expertise on the part of the organization. For a large plant with thousands of process nodes to be analysed, a full HAZOP implementation is no small task. But for all that, it is still considered best practice in high-hazard industries and an indispensable part of any process safety management programme.

2.2.3 Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)

With FMEA, you are looking at equipment and system failures before they happen and what they mean for safety, reliability, and performance. It is a systematic way of going through individual components to find possible failure modes, get to the root cause, and judge the impact on the system as a whole.

In the context of H₂S, FMEA is invaluable for appraising the dependability of safety-critical gear like:

- Gas and alarm detection
- Emergency shutdowns
- Ventilation and breathing apparatus
- Process controls and pressure protection
- Communications

Why is FMEA so important for H₂S? Because there is always the risk that a safety system will let you down when you need it most. A gas detector that misses a release, or an alarm that doesn't sound, or ventilation that gives out in an emergency can make an accident far worse. By spotting these weaknesses early, you can put in place the right redundancy and preventive maintenance.

FMEA also feeds into asset integrity management by flagging up the components that add the most to your overall risk, allowing you to focus your inspections, spare parts, and replacement plans where they count. That said, since FMEA is largely concerned with the component level, it can miss the more intricate human or organisational dynamics. You will get the best results by using it in tandem with other risk assessment tools.

2.2.4 What-If Analysis

What-If Analysis is a more free-form and creative means of hazard identification. Rather than following a rigid formalism, it has teams use their expert judgement to brainstorm and ask the hard questions about abnormal situations.

You might pose some hypotheticals to test your assumptions, for instance, in H₂S management:

- What happens if we have a pipeline rupture in bad weather?
- What if the power goes to the gas detection network during a release?
- Can our emergency responders actually get to the scene?
- What if several safety barriers go down at once?
- Are the contractors up to speed on our H₂S procedures?

The point is to uncover the rare or unexpected – the sort of thing traditional methods might overlook. Major accidents tend to come from a confluence of unanticipated failures, and What-If Analysis is good at finding those. It gets people thinking proactively about their vulnerabilities and helps build resilience for the future.

2.2.5 An Integrated Hazard Identification Strategy for H₂S Management

Each of these techniques has its merits, but none is a panacea for the varied risks you face with H₂S operations. To manage the risk properly, you need an integrated strategy that makes use of them all.

There is the broad visibility and prioritisation of HIRA, the granular process analysis of HAZOP, the equipment evaluation of FMEA, and the scenario-testing of What-If. Put them together, and you have a much better basis for decision-making.

It is in keeping with modern process safety management to have such a unified framework (Kwon et al., 2016; Nwankwo et al., 2020). By layering these complementary approaches, you gain a more complete picture of the hazards and put yourself in a stronger position for everything from risk assessment to emergency preparedness.

2.3 Exposure Pathways and Vulnerable Targets

To manage the hazards of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) in any meaningful way, one must have a thorough grasp of how the gas is put into the environment, how it travels, and what it might encounter along the way. We define exposure pathways as the means by which H₂S makes its way to people, property, or ecological systems; vulnerable targets are those who stand to be adversely affected by a release. Pinpointing these is a prerequisite for putting in place sound strategies for prevention, detection, mitigation, and emergency response.

At an oil and gas site, there is no shortage of places where H₂S can come from: wellheads, drilling and maintenance work, separators, storage tanks, pipelines, pressure-relief gear and gas treatment units are all possibilities. The moment it is released, the gas will disperse at a pace dictated by the weather, the lay of the land, and what is happening operationally at the time. Given that H₂S is heavier than air, you will find it pooling in confined spaces and low-lying ground, which puts workers in those areas at greater risk (Didik Mustakim et al., 2025).

2.3.1 Personnel Exposure

When it comes to H₂S risk management, the workforce is the most important vulnerable target. Those on the front lines of production, inspection, construction, drilling, or emergency duties are often not far from where a release could occur, so an accident can subject them to dangerous levels of the gas in short order.

You see this risk in spades during non-routine work like vessel cleaning, pipeline pigging, isolating equipment, or entering a confined space. These are

times when a worker might be dealing with process equipment and residual gas he cannot see. And for the emergency responder who has to go in once an incident is underway, the risks are even higher owing to unknown conditions and high concentrations (Özmen & Aksoy, 2015).

A number of things make personnel more or less vulnerable: how long they are exposed, their distance from the source, and whether they have the right PPE and training. But human elements play a part too. Fatigue, poor communication, not following procedure, or a lack of situational awareness can leave a worker open to an H₂S incident. In the end, a strong safety culture and a competent workforce are what make exposure management work.

2.3.2 Asset and Infrastructure Exposure

The threat H₂S poses is not limited to people; it is hard on physical assets and infrastructure as well. Pipelines, valves, compressors, and other processing gear can suffer from material degradation, hydrogen embrittlement, corrosion, and sulfide stress cracking if left in a sulfur-laden environment.

As the integrity of the equipment breaks down, you are more likely to have a loss-of-containment or mechanical failure. That in turn raises the odds of an H₂S release and can set off secondary problems like fires or explosions that halt production. For this reason, asset exposure needs to be treated as a central element of your risk programme and not just something for the maintenance department to worry about (Redutskiy et al., 2021).

Then there are the safety-critical systems. If you do not keep up with inspections, the reliability of your ventilation, gas detectors and emergency shutdowns will wane under H₂S-induced wear and tear. When those protective barriers let you down, the organisation is ill-equipped to handle a hazardous release, and operational risk goes up.

2.3.3 Environmental Exposure

It is easy to focus on worker safety as the first-order concern in an H₂S release, but the environmental side of the equation should not be ignored. When incidents take place in the vicinity of environmentally sensitive areas, a large-scale release can have an impact on the local water resources, vegetation, and wildlife as well as the wider ecosystem. The extent of environmental exposure is a function of many variables: the size of the release, topography and weather, and how close one is to natural receptors. An accidental spill at sea will be felt by marine ecosystems, whereas an onshore problem could encroach on residential communities,

surface waters, or agricultural land. If such exposure is protracted, it can lead to ecological disruption and a loss of biodiversity, raising contamination issues that are expensive to put right.

Then there is the matter of public and regulatory eyes being on you; environmental incidents often bring with them reputational harm and stiffer compliance demands. For these reasons, any H₂S risk assessment and mitigation plan has to give full weight to environmental protection.

2.3.4 Organizational and Economic Impacts

H₂S incidents do more than cause physical damage; they can be hard on an organization's performance. A major release typically means production comes to a halt and equipment is damaged, not to mention the cost of legal liabilities, compensation, regulatory probes, and higher insurance premiums. All of this adds up to considerable financial loss and can throw long-term operations into disarray.

Reputationally speaking, significant safety lapses can erode the trust of investors and stakeholders alike and strain relations with the community if hazardous operations are not properly in hand. In today's competitive energy sector, that kind of fallout can bear on an organization's very sustainability. Hatami-Marbini et al. (2024) note in their work on integrated risk management that one must look at safety events from the vantage point of business continuity and overall resilience, not just direct operational consequences. So a complete approach to H₂S risk needs to be holistic, covering both the technical and organizational sides.

2.3.5 Cascading and Secondary Accident Scenarios

The danger with H₂S is that it can set off a cascade of problems. You may have one release event that leads to a string of connected failures, which only serve to magnify the outcome. Take an undetected leak, for instance: it puts personnel at risk and undermines equipment integrity, and with an ignition source around, you have the makings of a fire or explosion.

Or consider what happens when a safety barrier gives way and puts more strain on the rest of the system. Should the gas detectors go down during a release, emergency teams are left with a delayed warning, making evacuation less effective and lengthening exposure times. These kinds of interactions show why you cannot afford to look at hazards in isolation. As Barkhatov et al. (2022) have pointed out in their research on safety barriers, the

big accidents usually come from several things going wrong at once rather than some solitary technical flaw. An organization has to view its processes, protective measures, and emergency capabilities as interdependent.

2.3.6 Implications for Integrated Risk Management

Given the variety of ways in which H₂S can expose vulnerable targets, you cannot manage the hazard with piecemeal safety measures. There is a clear link between the protection of your people and assets, environmental concerns, and the resilience of the organization; all need to be part of one framework.

By taking an integrated view, an organization can see how a hazard might move through the system and hit different receptors at the same time. That sort of insight allows for better prioritization of controls and where to put your safety money, as well as more coherent emergency planning. It also sets the stage for the risk assessment methods we will cover next, in which we systematically go over the identified hazards and exposure pathways to gauge their true significance.

2.4 Risk Assessment Approaches

At the heart of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) management is risk assessment, a process that supplies the analytical underpinning for gauging both the chances and the fallout of hazardous events. Where hazard identification is about spotting where the danger lies, risk assessment is concerned with the weight of that danger, looking at how probable an incident is and how severe its impact could be. For an organization in a high-risk oil and gas facility, a sound risk assessment is what allows you to put control measures in place that are commensurate with the risk, to make the most of your resources, and to know which safety interventions to put first.

Given the nature of H₂S hazards, one needs structured methodologies to deal with everything from technical and human failings to environmental or organizational weaknesses. As such, modern risk management systems will draw on a mix of qualitative, semi-quantitative, and quantitative techniques to get a full picture of operational risk.

2.4.1 Qualitative Risk Assessment

The go-to first step for most industrial hazards is a qualitative approach. It is the most common way to begin an evaluation. Here you are not dealing in hard numbers but in descriptive terms like low, medium, high, or extreme. The method is driven by the

experience and judgement of experts to determine what the consequences might be.

You will often see qualitative assessments used in H₂S management for things like routine workplace inspections, hazard workshops or early project reviews. Its appeal is in its simplicity; it lets an organization zero in on critical hazards without the need for complex tools or a lot of data gathering. Because of this accessibility, staff from various disciplines can be part of the process, and decisions can be made quickly even when operational data is thin on the ground.

There is a downside to this subjectivity, though. Different people may interpret the risk categories in their own way, leading to inconsistent outcomes. This is a real concern with something like a major H₂S release where the odds are low, but the consequences are high; a slight variation in judgement can skew the risk ranking. For that reason, qualitative methods are best seen as a screening tool rather than the final word on a critical matter.

2.4.2 *Semi-Quantitative Risk Assessment*

If you want something more rigorous than a purely qualitative view but not as involved as a full quantitative model, semi-quantitative methods offer a middle ground. By assigning numerical scores to likelihood and consequence, they allow for a more systematic comparison of risks.

In H₂S programmes, these are typically part of the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) process. You might rate likelihood on the basis of past incidents or how reliable the equipment is, while consequence ratings would take into account personnel safety, asset integrity and the like (Alamsyah et al., 2024; Albar et al., 2022). The scores that come out of this help decision-makers tell the difference between a hazard that needs to be dealt with right away and one that can be handled with routine controls, all in a transparent fashion.

They are also very practical. There is no need for the kind of computational power or specialist knowledge an advanced model would demand, which is why the industry makes wide use of them for maintenance planning, contractor oversight, and emergency preparedness. That said, they can still be somewhat subjective and tend to smooth over the complexities of interacting risk factors, so for any critical H₂S scenario with serious potential consequences, you would want to back them up with a more in-depth analysis.

2.4.3 *Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA)*

For the most thorough and data-heavy form of

evaluation, there is QRA. It is an entirely numerical exercise that puts together mathematical modelling, statistics, and simulations of consequences along with historical data and failure probabilities to arrive at an estimate of the risk. There is a particular value in this methodology for high-hazard industries where an accident can have dire consequences, as it lends a more objective basis to the decision-making process.

Take H₂S applications for instance. A QRA will usually encompass a number of analytical components: you have the identification of what might be released and how often, gas dispersion modelling, exposure and fatality probability analysis, and an overall evaluation of the consequences. Put them all together, and an organization can get a handle on the individual and societal risk profiles, as well as the loss scenarios to be expected from their operations.

The real strength of QRA lies in its capacity to back up safety investments with evidence. If you can put a number on the risk reduction that comes with alternative controls, you are in a better position to justify the outlay and make sure resources are put to best use. That is no small thing in the oil and gas sector, where safety improvements can mean a considerable financial commitment. At the same time, the method gives you measurable indicators for regulatory compliance and lets you see if your current safeguards are doing enough or if you need to put additional controls in place.

Then again, QRA is not without its difficulties. To do it right, you need good operational data, people with the right expertise, and plenty of computing power. And there are uncertainties in human behaviour, in the assumptions behind dispersion models, or in failure rates that can colour the results. So one should not mistake a quantitative analysis for an exact forecast of the future; it has to be read in light of the organization's own experience and knowledge.

2.4.4 *Process Safety Management and Risk Assessment Integration*

How well a risk assessment works is a matter of more than just the analytical techniques you bring to bear; it is about how the results are folded into the wider safety management system. PSM frameworks would have it that risk assessment is a continuous undertaking, not something you do once and put on the shelf (Kwon, 2006; Mohd Shariff et al., 2016).

In a properly run PSM programme, what the assessment turns up will feed into everything from the design of processes and maintenance schedules to training the workforce and planning for

emergencies. It is the way to turn a known risk into a control measure that will actually lessen the severity of an accident. The research bears this out: organizations with mature PSM systems tend to have better safety records because they make a habit of linking hazard identification and risk assessment to the way they learn and operate (Nwankwo et al., 2020; Krishna & Thirumalainathan, 2022). For H₂S, where you are relying on a host of technical and organizational protections working in concert, that integration is key.

2.4.5 Risk Assessment Challenges in H₂S Management

You still run into problems with H₂S risk evaluation even with the latest methodology. Estimating the probability of a major release is hard precisely because while they don't happen often, when they do, the consequences are catastrophic.

And operational risks are not static. As production demands shift or equipment wears, so too does the risk profile, which a traditional assessment done at set intervals may miss. On top of that, the move towards digital transformation and the sheer complexity of modern operations – think remote systems and new technologies – introduce uncertainties that conventional methods don't always cover (Wanasinghe et al., 2021). What you see now is a greater focus on being able to monitor risk in real time and make the kind of proactive decisions that build resilience.

Section Summary

In short, risk assessment is the analytical underpinning of sound H₂S management, turning hazards into information you can act on. Whether you are using qualitative or quantitative means, they are complementary tools. Woven into a PSM system, they allow an organization to put its priorities in order and shore up its operational controls. We will look at the principles of risk ranking and how they inform resource allocation in what follows.

2.5 Risk Ranking and Prioritization

Once an organization has completed its hazard identification and risk assessment, it is left with the task of deciding where to apply immediate intervention and where routine operational controls will suffice. This is where risk ranking and prioritization come in as a vital part of the risk management process, turning the numbers from an assessment into decisions you can act on.

In the case of high-risk oil and gas facilities, resources are limited, yet hazards are plentiful. Sound prioritization is what allows safety efforts to

be concentrated on the areas that pose the most danger to your people, your assets, the environment, and the continuity of operations. The point of this exercise is to make for better decision-making by drawing a clear line between risks that are acceptable or tolerable and those that are not. It is how facility operators put their financial, technical, and human capital to work in the most efficient way to drive down risk. With hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) in particular, you cannot afford to be complacent; a release can spiral out of hand in short order, so effective prioritization is key to having time for corrective action.

At its core, risk ranking is about the interplay of likelihood and consequence – the probability of an event happening and how severe the outcome would be. Simple as it sounds, putting a value on these in an H₂S setting is not always easy given the variables of human behaviour, equipment performance, and the like. To bring some consistency and transparency to the table, many organizations will use a structured risk matrix.

Risk Matrix Application in H₂S Management.

The risk matrix is a useful tool for sorting hazards by their relative importance. You combine the ratings for likelihood and consequence to assign a priority level and set the course for management action. When running an H₂S management programme, your consequence assessment will have to account for a range of impacts:

- The potential for injury or death among personnel.
- Environmental harm.
- Losses to infrastructure and assets.
- Any disruption to production.
- Regulatory or legal fallout.
- What it means for your reputation and finances.

Put simply, a scenario where workers are exposed to lethal H₂S levels and you face environmental contamination and a major production stoppage will be ranked far above a contained incident with little operational impact.

Managers, engineers, and regulators can all get a handle on complex risk data through a matrix, but do not mistake it for a replacement for proper analysis. If your underlying hazard identification is weak or your criteria for likelihood are poorly defined, you will end up with inaccurate priorities and misallocated safety resources.

Dynamic Risk Prioritization

You might think risk levels are static, but traditional ranking methods can be misleading. In an oil and gas facility, the risk profile is anything but. A

change in the workforce, ageing equipment, new technology, or even the weather can shift things considerably. Take a pipeline section once deemed low risk; show some corrosion, and it becomes a top concern. Or consider how a management-of-change procedure might open up new exposure routes for H₂S. For this reason, there is a move towards more dynamic frameworks and a continuous re-evaluation of what matters (Macrae, 2025).

With the adoption of digital safety tech and predictive analytics, organizations are in a better position to spot an emerging threat before it becomes an incident, which is only going to be more important as systems become more interconnected (Wanasinghe et al., 2021).

Risk-Based Allocation of Control Measures

There is no point in good prioritization if it does not lead to the right kind of control. Mitigation should be in proportion to the risk you have identified. Where H₂S risks are high, you will see engineering solutions like automated shutdowns and better containment, along with advanced gas detection, more rigorous inspection regimes and extra safety barriers. You may also invest in specialized training for your workforce and beef up emergency response.

For medium-priority items, administrative controls and periodic reviews will do. Low-priority risks can be mopped up with standard operating procedures and monitoring. It is a hierarchy that makes sense for resource utilization.

Table 1. H₂S Risk Ranking Matrix for High-Risk Oil and Gas Facilities.

Likelihood	Minor (First-aid injury,	Moderate (Medical treatment,	Major (Serious injury,	Severe (Fatality, major
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	negligible operational impact)	localized disruption)	significant asset damage)	release, catastrophic disruption)
Rare	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Possible	Low	Medium	High	High
Likely	Medium	High	High	Extreme
Frequent	High	High	Extreme	Extreme

Interpretation of Risk Levels

Risk Category	Management Response
Low	Acceptable under normal operational controls; periodic monitoring required.
Medium	Additional preventive measures should be considered and reviewed regularly.
High	Immediate mitigation actions required; management oversight necessary.
Extreme	Unacceptable risk; operations must not proceed until risk reduction measures are implemented.

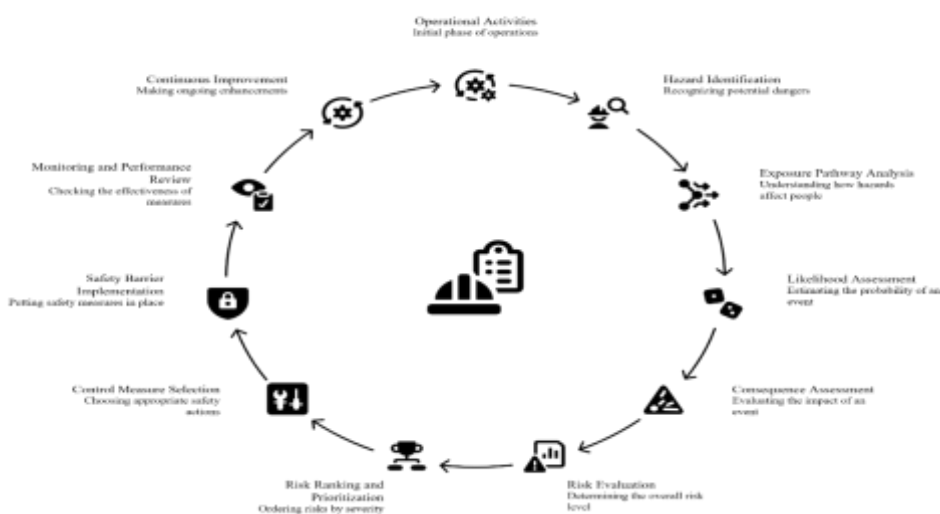
Source: Adapted from common industrial risk matrix methodologies and tailored for H₂S risk management in oil and gas facilities.

Risk Prioritization and Integrated Safety Management

Today’s thinking is that you should not be doing risk prioritization in a vacuum. The results need to feed into the rest of the organization – from asset integrity and process safety to workforce development and emergency preparedness (Mohd Shariff et al., 2016; Krishna & Thirumalainathan, 2022).

If you want to be effective at managing H₂S, those prioritization outcomes have to influence how decisions are made across the board. That is what builds resilience and makes your safety-critical barriers work.

Workflow 1. H₂S Risk Assessment and Prioritization Process.



Section Summary

In short, risk ranking is the bridge between assessment and control. By being systematic about which H₂S threats are most significant, an organization can put its resources where they will have the most effect. Given the complexity of modern oil and gas work, we need approaches to prioritization that are both integrated and dynamic enough to keep up with conditions. We will build on these principles in the next section to present a unified framework for H₂S risk governance.

3. AN INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY FOR HYDROGEN SULFIDE HAZARDS

3.1 The Conceptual Basis of the Methodology

As the earlier sections have shown, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) is not merely an occupational health issue in the traditional sense; its hazards are part of a more complicated web of technical, human, and environmental interactions, as well as operational and organizational ones. Conventional risk management has its place in identifying and assessing such hazards, but it is often put into practice as a stand-alone exercise, disconnected from the wider safety management system. This kind of fragmentation can blunt the impact of your control measures and leave an organization ill-equipped to deal with H₂S incidents before they happen or in the aftermath.

Today's oil and gas facilities are far more complex than they used to be, with their automated controls, vast infrastructure, and the involvement of contractors. In such an environment, you will seldom find an H₂S risk isolated to one piece of equipment or activity. It is usually the product of several factors at play – technical, organizational, environmental – all of which bear on the safety of the system as a whole. For that reason, we need a more thorough way of managing these risks.

To that end, this study puts forward an Integrated Risk Management Methodology (IRMM) for use in high-risk oil and gas operations. We take a systems view of things: risk management should be a seamless, ongoing process, not a collection of separate tasks. Our framework brings together everything from hazard identification and asset integrity to workforce competency and emergency preparedness under one roof.

We have built the conceptual underpinnings of this methodology on three theories: Process Safety Management, Barrier-Based Safety Management, and Integrated Risk Governance.

A Process Safety Management View

Process Safety Management (PSM) is the structural core of what we propose. As Kwon (2006) and Mohd Shariff et al. (2016) note, PSM is about the systematic control of hazards linked to dangerous substances and industrial processes. But it goes beyond the safety of the individual worker to prevent major accidents by coordinating everything from process design and maintenance to organizational oversight. In our methodology, PSM principles see to it that H₂S is managed at every stage of the facility's life, from the initial design through to decommissioning, putting in place several layers of protection against any release.

The Barrier-Based Approach

The second pillar is barrier-based safety management. Research makes it clear that when you have a major industrial accident, it is often because a number of protective barriers have failed at once or worn down (Barkhatov et al., 2022). So proper H₂S management means you have to put in place and keep an eye on a variety of preventive and mitigative barriers. These could be anything from process containment and corrosion prevention to gas detection, ventilation, and personal protective equipment. They also include the more procedural side of things, like permit-to-work systems, training, and emergency response. We make barrier management a key part of our risk governance so that performance is regularly re-evaluated.

Integrated Risk Governance

Then there is the matter of integrated risk governance. The old way of doing things is to put operational safety, environmental matters, and asset integrity in different administrative silos, which can lead to a lack of awareness and poor communication. We want to get past that. By fostering information sharing and collaboration among all the stakeholders, an organization can make better, evidence-based decisions and be more resilient in the face of complex hazards like H₂S (Macrae, 2025; Vella Bonanno et al., 2025).

What the Methodology Entails

Drawing on these foundations, the IRMM is driven by five principles:

1. Proactive Risk Prevention – Control the hazard before an incident takes place.
2. Multiple Layers of Protection – Use engineering and administrative barriers to limit exposure.
3. Continuous Monitoring and Verification – Keep tabs on risk conditions and how well your barriers are holding up.
4. Integrated Decision-Making – Don't look at safety and operations in isolation.

5. Continuous Learning and Improvement – Make sure audits and lessons from past incidents feed into your future activities.

The aim is straightforward: to cut down on the chance of an H₂S release and personnel exposure while improving the reliability of your assets and your compliance with regulations. It is a way of overcoming the shortcomings of a piecemeal approach to safety.

In the next section, we will move from theory to practice. We will lay out the components of the proposed methodology and show how they come together to form a workable system for controlling risk and building organizational resilience.

3.2 The Integrated Risk Management Methodology: Framework and Components

Our proposed Integrated Risk Management Methodology (IRMM) for dealing with hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) hazards is conceived as a continuous, holistic system. It brings together everything from hazard prevention and risk assessment to emergency preparedness, operational control, and organizational learning under one roof. In this way, it stands apart from the more traditional approaches you might find in oil and gas facilities, which have a habit of treating these as separate functions; we see them as interdependent elements of the operational lifecycle that must be integrated.

The framework rests on six components that are inextricably linked. While each has its own role in identifying and controlling H₂S risks, they work in concert to foster proactive governance and steady safety improvements.

3.2.1 Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Module

You could call this the bedrock of the methodology. This module is tasked with a systematic identification of H₂S hazards, an evaluation of how exposure might occur and what the consequences could be, and ultimately a determination of risk levels. To do this, we employ the techniques set out in Section 2:

- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)
 - What-If Analysis
 - Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA)
 - Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)
 - Hazard and Operability Studies (HAZOP)

The information they produce on risk sources, accident scenarios, and priorities is vital for informing decisions in the rest of the framework. We do not view risk assessment as something you do for

periodic compliance. It is an ongoing process; any operational or equipment changes, maintenance work, or incident investigation will yield new data that is fed right back into the cycle.

3.2.2 Prevention and Engineering Control Module

Once the risks are known, the framework puts a premium on prevention by means of engineering controls and inherently safer design. After all, there is no better way to reduce risk than to remove the hazard before anyone is exposed to it.

We rely on preventive measures such as:

- Sour-service equipment and corrosion-resistant materials
- Automated process controls and leak prevention tech
- Process containment and pressure-relief protection
- Ventilation

These are your first line of defence against an accidental H₂S release, and they take the onus off human intervention. By tying them in with asset integrity management and reliability engineering, their effectiveness is all the more pronounced.

3.2.3 Safety Barrier Management Module

Here we are concerned with putting in place and looking after multiple layers of protection. As Barkhatov et al. (2022) note, modern process safety theory is clear that you cannot count on a single safeguard to do the job; you need several independent barriers working in unison. We have divided our safety barriers into three types:

Preventive Barriers

To make a hazardous release less likely, we use things like permit-to-work procedures, management-of-change systems, and programmes for equipment integrity and corrosion monitoring.

Detection and Control Barriers

For when conditions go awry and corrective action is needed, we have fixed and portable gas monitors, alarms, process instruments, and emergency shutdowns at the ready.

Mitigative Barriers

Should a release happen, these are in place to limit the damage. This covers escape breathing apparatus, muster and evacuation protocols, and the resources of our medical and incident command teams.

Under this methodology, we don't just assume the barriers are working; we verify their performance on a regular basis through audits, testing, and inspections.

3.2.4 Monitoring and Early Warning Module

Then there is the matter of continuous monitoring, which is perhaps the most salient feature of what we propose. Where conventional safety systems are content with periodic inspections and looking back at the numbers, modern risk management is all about predictive ability and real-time awareness.

To that end, this module brings together a number of tools:

- Fixed H₂S detection networks and portable monitors
- SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition)
- IIoT sensors for the Industrial Internet of Things
- Predictive maintenance and data analytics platforms

The aim is to spot any signs of deterioration before they turn into a hazardous event. Such early warning is what allows for proactive intervention and gives operations the resilience they need (Wanasinghe et al., 2021).

3.2.5 Emergency Preparedness and Response Module

You can have the best prevention in place, but in any high-hazard operation, there will be residual risks. It is therefore incumbent on organizations to have the means to respond quickly should an accidental H₂S release occur.

Our emergency management component covers the essentials:

- Planning for response and incident command
- Evacuation and rescue protocols
- Medical response and stakeholder communication
- Regular drills and exercises

What makes the framework notable is how it ties emergency preparedness to the results of your risk assessments. If a hazard analysis flags a high-priority scenario, that will directly shape the emergency plan so your response and prevention functions are in step.

3.2.6 Organizational Learning and Continuous Improvement Module

Long-term sustainability of the framework is the job of the final component. A safety management system has to evolve with new technology, regulations, operational experience, and whatever risks may be on the horizon.

We incorporate:

- Incident investigations and near-miss reporting
- Audits and management reviews
- Mechanisms for workforce feedback and lessons-learned programmes
- Performance measurement

All of this information is channeled back into the hazard identification, barrier management, and risk assessment processes. The resulting feedback loop not only refines risk controls but also fosters a more robust safety culture (Yoon et al., 2024).

Table 2. Components of the Proposed Integrated Risk Management Methodology.

Framework Component	Primary Function	Key Outputs
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	Identify and evaluate H ₂ S risks	Risk register, risk rankings
Prevention and Engineering Controls	Prevent hazardous releases	Reduced likelihood of incidents
Safety Barrier Management	Establish layers of protection	Enhanced system reliability
Monitoring and Early Warning	Detect abnormal conditions	Real-time risk awareness
Emergency Preparedness and Response	Minimize incident consequences	Improved response effectiveness
Organizational Learning and Improvement	Sustain long-term performance	Continuous safety enhancement

Framework Integration

These six components do not work in isolation; that would be contrary to the point of the proposed methodology. They are part of an interconnected whole. Your risk assessment will dictate how you put barriers in place, while monitoring tells you how well those barriers are holding up. Emergency exercises might expose a weakness in operations, and organizational learning sees to it that the lesson is factored into future decisions.

In short, this integrated approach turns risk management from a matter of reactive compliance into something far more adaptive and proactive when it comes to the H₂S hazards found in today's oil and gas facilities.

Section Summary

Taken as a whole, the six parts of our Integrated Risk Management Methodology are mutually reinforcing. Whether it is hazard prevention or continuous improvement, they provide a structured way to handle H₂S risks over the life of the facility by putting technical safeguards, real-time monitoring, and organisational processes under one roof. We will build on this in the next section, where we look at the role of safety barriers and the practical workflow for putting the methodology to use.

3.3 Putting Safety Barriers and Operational Workflow Together

The Integrated Risk Management Methodology we put forward is predicated on a simple tenet: you cannot control the risks of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) with any one safeguard alone. We have seen too many major industrial accidents where several protective measures have failed at once, or where a flaw in the safety system has gone unnoticed right up to the point of a hazardous event. For this reason, our approach is multilayered, bringing together preventive, detective, corrective, and mitigative controls to lower overall risk exposure.

This is consistent with what is already well known in process safety management and resilience engineering. A safety barrier – be it technical, operational or organizational – is meant to head off a hazardous event or limit the damage from an accident. But as Barkhatov et al. (2022) note, a risk management system is only as good as the way its individual barriers interact and back each other up.

In H₂S management specifically, we integrate these barriers across the entire operational lifecycle, from the prevention of hazards all the way to emergency recovery. The idea is that if one line of defence gives way, it will not lead straight to catastrophe.

3.3.1 Preventive Safety Barriers

Think of preventive barriers as your first line of defence against H₂S incidents. They are there to cut down the odds of an accidental release or eliminate the hazard altogether before anyone is exposed. You will find them in inherently safer process design, in the specs for sour-service equipment, and in how we handle corrosion. They are also embedded in our systems for preventive maintenance, work permits, and managing change, as well as in the competency and certification we require of the workforce and contractors.

Such controls are vital because it is far more effective to reduce risk at the source than to try to mitigate it after something has happened.

3.3.2 Detection and Control Barriers

Even with strong prevention in place, complex industrial systems always carry some residual risk. That is where detection and control barriers come in as a second layer. Their job is to spot when things are going wrong and put corrective measures in motion before they get out of hand.

We rely on a range of tools for this, from fixed H₂S gas networks and portable monitors to automated alarms and SCADA systems. There are also

emergency shutdown (ESD) and remote isolation options. In fact, the use of digital monitoring has given us better surveillance and predictive capabilities (Wanasinghe et al., 2021). Of course, these are only as useful as their reliability and calibration, so we make periodic testing and verification a non-negotiable part of the methodology.

3.3.3 Mitigative Safety Barriers

If the preventive and detection controls do not fully contain an event, mitigative barriers are put into play to shield personnel, assets, and the environment from the worst of it. This could mean deploying escape breathing apparatus, activating emergency shelters, or putting muster and evacuation procedures into effect. We also have incident command structures, fire protection, and mutual aid agreements in place.

To make sure these barriers hold up when it matters, we conduct regular drills and realistic training to keep our response capabilities sharp.

3.3.4 Organizational and Human-Factor Barriers

Technical safeguards by themselves are no guarantee of risk control. Accident investigations tell us that human error and organizational shortcomings are often to blame for the big ones. So we treat organisational and behavioural barriers as part and parcel of risk governance.

This means fostering safety leadership and an open culture for reporting incidents, but also enforcing operational discipline and running proper audit and compliance programmes. Strong organisational barriers do more than just improve the performance of technical controls; they build a proactive safety culture and make the whole organisation better at spotting new risks as they emerge.

Table 3. Integrated Safety Barrier Structure for H₂S Risk Management.

Barrier Category	Objective	Examples
Preventive Barriers	Prevent the occurrence of hazardous releases	Corrosion management, permit-to-work systems, preventive maintenance
Detection and Control Barriers	Identify abnormal conditions and initiate a response	Gas detectors, alarms, SCADA systems, emergency shutdown systems
Mitigative Barriers	Reduce the consequences of incidents	Evacuation systems, breathing apparatus, emergency response teams

Organizational Barriers	Strengthen governance and human performance	Training programmes, audits, leadership commitment, safety culture initiatives
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Why the Framework Matters

Our proposed workflow is not a linear exercise; it is a continuous cycle. Data from an inspection, an audit, or an incident investigation is fed right back into the hazard identification and risk assessment side of things. This allows the framework to evolve with changing conditions and promotes learning over the long term.

By unifying everything from emergency preparedness to human factors under one roof, we can offer a way of managing H₂S in high-risk oil and gas facilities that is far more comprehensive than a fragmented system would allow.

Summary

What we have outlined here is how the methodology uses multiple layers of barriers to stop H₂S releases, pick up on abnormalities, and deal with the aftermath of an accident. The operational workflow shows the dynamic, cyclical nature of this. Put together, they are the practical means by which integrated H₂S risk management is achieved.

4. PUTTING THE INTEGRATED H₂S RISK MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY INTO PRACTICE AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

4.1 How to Implement in High-Risk Oil and Gas Facilities

You can only judge the worth of an integrated risk management methodology for hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) by how well it is put to work in a real industrial setting. While our proposed framework has a sound theoretical basis, its success hinges on embedding its principles into the fabric of your organization's safety governance, operational processes, and structures.

The first step is to make sure the methodology fits with what you already have in place under Process Safety Management (PSM). We have not designed this as a parallel system to be tacked on; instead, it should complement your current safety practices. By forging stronger links between emergency preparedness, barrier management, risk assessment, and hazard identification, the integrated approach adds value without creating any duplication or fragmenting responsibility.

Then there is the matter of leadership. Senior management must be fully committed if the system is to become an operational reality and not just another procedural formality. It is up to them to set

the tone, assign resources, and hold people to account. With their backing, H₂S risk management is elevated to a strategic concern for the business, not merely a box to be ticked for technical compliance.

Workforce buy-in is just as vital. Your frontline staff is usually the first to spot when operating conditions go awry, so their active role in reporting hazards and identifying risks will make the system all the more effective. This means training and building competency are non-negotiable; personnel need to know the H₂S hazards and the right way to control them.

Digital tools can also give implementation a boost. Today's oil and gas facilities are making use of sensor networks and automated controls to inform decisions. When you have these digital platforms in place for data management and predictive analytics, you get better situational awareness and can catch hazardous conditions before they develop.

4.2 The Organizational and Operational Hurdles

It is not all smooth sailing, however. There are challenges to be faced in rolling out an integrated H₂S methodology.

Organizational fragmentation is a common problem. In many companies, engineering, maintenance, operations, and safety are run as separate fiefdoms within the departmental structure. That kind of separation can stifle the flow of information and make for less effective decision-making.

Data can be another headache. To manage risk properly, you need hard numbers on equipment failures, incident history, and environmental factors. All too often, at a facility, the data is patchy, inconsistent, or locked away in different systems, which in turn compromises the reliability of your predictive models and risk assessments.

And let us not forget the human element. Even the best system can be undermined by resistance to change or a lack of discipline. With H₂S, where an exposure event can escalate in seconds, you cannot afford variability in procedural compliance. You have to put in the work to reinforce a strong safety culture through supervision and ongoing training.

Finally, integrating technology has its own complexities. IIoT and other monitoring systems are of great benefit, but only if they are well maintained and you can make sense of the output. If you do not integrate them well with your legacy systems, you may end up with information silos or a false sense of security about how reliable your system is. Multinational operations have to contend with the

regulatory variance that exists from one jurisdiction to another. Where safety standards, compliance frameworks and reporting obligations differ, our methodology must be adapted to fit the local context without losing sight of the broader principles of risk management.

4.3 Performance Evaluation and Effectiveness Criteria

To properly evaluate an integrated risk management approach, you need a mix of leading and lagging indicators; they are what tell you about both your preventive abilities and the results of any incidents. Relying on conventional safety metrics like lost-time injury frequency will only give you so much of a picture, especially when it comes to process safety and the kind of low-frequency, high-consequence events we see with H₂S releases. A more thorough way of looking at things is called for.

Leading indicators are where you get an early read on system performance and spot any weaknesses before they become an incident. These are proactive in nature and cover everything from how often hazards are reported and safety training is undertaken to the completion of inspections, the integrity of safety barriers, and how well monitoring systems respond.

Then there are the lagging indicators, which are reactive by definition. They measure what has already happened – the severity and number of H₂S incidents, near-misses, equipment failures or any run-ins with regulators. You need them to understand your history, but they do not offer enough of a heads-up on risks as they emerge. An effective evaluation system has to blend the two for a balanced view. Under the proposed methodology, we also make a point of closely monitoring barrier performance, continuously checking that our preventive and mitigative systems are as reliable and effective as they should be.

4.4 Continuous Improvement and Adaptation

What sets this methodology apart is its focus on continuous improvement. Risk management is a dynamic system, not something static; it has to change with the times, be it new technology or shifts in the operational environment. We drive that improvement by systematically going over performance data, audit results, and any near misses.

Incident investigation is key here. If an H₂S event occurs, a deep dive into the root causes and system failures yields the kind of insights you can put to use in revised procedures and better risk assessments. Audits serve a similar purpose, making sure our

safety management is in line with what the organisation and regulators require and pointing up any inconsistencies or room for improvement.

Technology is another factor. With better sensors and predictive modelling, we are able to be more proactive in our risk management, catching abnormal conditions earlier and staving off H₂S incidents more effectively.

4.5 Section Summary

Putting an integrated H₂S risk management plan in place takes the right technology, a workforce that is fully engaged, and real commitment from the organisation. There are hurdles to clear – human factors, data constraints, the complexity of the technology and even some organisational fragmentation – but with a structured approach, these can be managed. The crux of the matter is having a performance evaluation that uses both leading and lagging indicators and puts weight on the reliability of your safety barriers. In the end, the methodology will only succeed if it can adapt as conditions do, keeping H₂S risks in check at these high-risk oil and gas facilities.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In the world of oil and gas, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) is still one of the most dangerous substances to deal with. It presents a host of risks for personnel, assets, and the environment, not to mention the continuity of the organization itself. What makes H₂S incidents so complex is that you have to contend with its acute toxicity as well as the interplay of human factors, environmental conditions, and operational systems in high-risk settings. To meet these head-on, this study has put forward an Integrated Risk Management Methodology (IRMM). It is a way of providing a more structured and holistic means of controlling H₂S risk.

What sets the proposed system apart from the conventional approach is that it does not view hazard identification, risk assessment, safety barriers, monitoring, or emergency preparedness as separate tasks. Instead, the IRMM weaves them into a single framework where their interdependence is key. By doing so, risk information can move without friction through the safety management process, which in turn leads to better situational awareness and more effective decisions.

We have shown that you need a multi-layered defence to manage H₂S properly – a mix of preventive, detection and mitigative barriers along

with organizational ones. On their own, each layer has a function in curbing the probability or fallout of a hazardous event; put together, they make for a resilient system that can stop an incident from escalating.

The research also underlines why dynamic risk assessment and ongoing improvement are so vital. In an industry where operations are always evolving, a static evaluation of risk will not tell the whole story when it comes to equipment or environmental changes. Our methodology builds in the feedback and monitoring necessary to keep controls relevant. In short, the IRMM offers an adaptable framework for facilities to be more proactive about H₂S hazards, strengthening the organization's resilience and safety record.

5.2 Future Directions

While the methodology we have outlined is a solid basis for managing H₂S risk, there is room to build on it. A natural next step is to look at how advanced digital tools like machine learning, AI, and predictive analytics can be folded in. In the right hands, these can sharpen the accuracy of risk prediction and give operators a more proactive edge in complicated environments.

We also see a need to develop real-time risk assessment models that go a step further than the current emphasis on continuous monitoring. Future work should focus on quantifying risk in a way that

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automatically adjusts to live data from the field.

Then there is the human side of things. Technical controls are only part of the equation; leadership, behavioural compliance, and the prevailing safety culture are what ultimately determine if a system works. A deeper study of how these organizational elements mesh with the technical ones would be valuable.

It would also be instructive to put the methodology to the test in the field. Case studies across the board – from upstream to downstream – would provide the empirical evidence needed to fine-tune the framework based on actual experience. And finally, there is no reason to limit this to hydrogen sulfide. Applying the integrated approach to other toxic industrial hazards such as ammonia, chlorine, or carbon monoxide would be a good way to prove its wider utility in the science of industrial safety.

5.3 Final Remark

Modern oil and gas operations are becoming ever more intricate and call for risk management that can keep up. The Integrated Risk Management Methodology is an answer to that demand, uniting the technical, operational, and organizational sides of the business. If adopted, it should go a long way toward preventing and mitigating H₂S hazards and making for more sustainable and safer operations.

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