

How to become a model for worksite safety and health



Gary Fitzmorris

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Thirty years at a family-owned company where you started out stocking shelves can give you a lot of perspective. You go from being the insecure, new kid to becoming a seasoned employee. You see personalities come and go, but most importantly, the company becomes your extended family. When Gary Fitzmorris took over as the Director of Safety & Compliance at Harbor Wholesale Foods he wanted more than safety rhetoric to protect this company.

Getting started

Gary looked for opportunities to mine the wisdom of workers and leverage the tools already available. At locations in both Lacey, Washington, and Roseburg, Oregon, he incorporated Keep Trucking Safe training materials and simulations into his new hire and refresher training programs. Recently, in response

to their dedication to safety, Harbor Wholesale Foods (Roseburg) was recognized as a model for worksite safety and health by the Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP)* administered by Oregon OSHA.

What makes this program a success?

Gary believes employee involvement and management support is what makes their safety program successful. One program that was developed at their Oregon location and is soon to be implemented in Washington is the Bi-Quarterly Safety & Information meeting. He says each meeting is 5-15 minutes long and includes all employees on a shift. It's designed to be an open forum for discussion of anything safety-related.

He admits that at first, the meetings were pretty quiet, but they just kept them up and over time ideas and suggestions started coming in. The real trust-builder came from his commitment to address all issues or topics that are brought up and report back on the status at the next meeting.

Gary appreciates the very important role the safety committee has in identifying and addressing safety concerns at their distribution centers. He notes that the safety committee is the backbone of the safety program and is made up of a diverse group of employees representing all aspects of the operation. Safety issues identified by the committee are quickly assigned to be addressed by the person or department best suited for the topic. As with the Bi-Quarterly meetings all issues are followed up on. Supporting documents follow a reported issue from the time it is reported until it is reviewed at the next monthly safety committee meeting.

The whole company wins when safety becomes a core value shared by everyone. For more of the story see our blog at KeepTruckingSafeBlog.org.

*Not affiliated with Safety & Health Assessment & Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program in Washington.

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