

Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation's Nashville Plant Achieves Significant Safety Milestone

Employees work 485,700 hours without an accident

Challenge:

There was a time when the recycling industry didn't pay much attention to safety as they do now. The accident rates and associated costs were going through the roof. During this period of time, Smurfit-Stone decided to move forward in its efforts to improve safety across their corporation.

Due to the nature of the recycling business, dealing with post-consumer materials such as cardboard and paper, and the amount of mobile equipment that is continuously operating in the plant, the employees of Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation in Nashville, Tennessee are faced with a certain amount of risk each day. Management at this particular plant was well aware of the challenge ahead of them, but they knew that the investment in time and money would be well spent. Their goal was to create a workplace in which employees returned home in the same condition they left - safely.

Solution:

Bruce Allred, Corporate Safety Director with Smurfit-Stone, drove the implementation of a program that encouraged people to observe workplace safety practices. Every single person in the organization was trained on this program – from management to sorters on the line. The next step of

the process was to educate employees on the various hazards that exist in the workplace and provide them with proper direction on how to safely do their jobs.

According to Jim Scheeringa, Plant Superintendent in Nashville, it has to go beyond simply observing. He encourages employees at his plant to stop and think. "By training people to stop

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and think, I am hoping that our employees begin to think about how to correctly do their jobs and avoid shortcuts – which often result in injury. It's important that they are comfortable asking questions – if they haven't done something before, if they haven't done something in a while, or if they just don't know!"

"Extremely important to this process has been treating each employee with a significant amount of respect and making them aware that they are a valuable asset to the organization. We make sure that each employee is aware

that we want them to return home in the same condition they left. It's not something that we do once, it is part of our culture and something that we are continuously communicating to our employees," said Scheeringa.

The result of this train of thought has been that people start looking out for one another. Although each person is ultimately only re-

sponsible for their own safety, it's necessary to look out for those around you in order to protect yourself because their actions could result in you being injured.

Another step that management at the Nashville plant has taken is to invest in higher quality personal protective equipment for their employees. The benefits far outweigh the costs associated with protecting their employees from injuries – no matter how serious. As an example, employees now wear gloves that are puncture resistant – and when dealing with all of the miscellaneous items that they do,

that protection is appreciated by employees.

In addition to all of the necessary culture changes and equipment upgrades, Scheeringa has used KellerOnline®, the online safety management tool by J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc., in order to develop and implement written safety plans on topics ranging from con-

in the tool.

Results:

The successful implementation of a true safety culture at Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation has made it possible for the Nashville plant to achieve many significant safety milestones. In 2006, they were named Plant of the Year within the Reclamation Division.

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financed spaces to lockout/tagout. Continued employee training has also been an integral part of the Nashville plant’s successful safety program. Using KellerOnline, Scheeringa has been able to create unique training programs utilizing the various resources found

Out of the 23 plants in this division, this recognition is based on a number of metrics including profitability and safety.

In July 2007, the plant achieved 10 years accident free. In the time since July 1997, the employees

at the plant have worked 485,700 hours. On August 20, 2007, they achieved 3,000 days without a recordable accident – working a typical five day per week schedule.

According to Scheeringa, “Although the biggest job was making people aware of safety and the impact that it has on themselves and those around them, each step of this process has made a difference and allowed us to maintain the safety record that we have today.

Smurfit-Stone is one of the world’s largest collectors of recycled paper and non-paper based recovered materials in the world. Annually, they collect and process 6.8 million tons of fiber; 45% of that collected fiber is used in their own mills. Their facilities are outfitted with the most sophisticated technology to collect and recycle such items as newsprint, old corrugated containers, aluminum cans, plastic milk jugs and much, much more. The state-of-the-art equipment allows their facilities to receive and sort co-mingled materials, greatly simplifying the collection process and improving efficiency.