

Occupational Health & Safety

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COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

Integrated Injury Intervention

KellerOnline offers a comprehensive approach to managing safety and health, staying in compliance.

by *Ronnie Rittenberry*

"I would give all my fame for a pot of ale, and safety." King Henry V, III, ii, 14.

As the cost of on-the-job injuries continues to rise, increasingly more U.S. executives may find themselves agreeing with the latter part of that Shakespearean sentiment—whether they like ale or not. According to the latest Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index, employee injuries are costing U.S. businesses almost \$1 billion each week, an amount that's up from recent years even after adjusting for inflation staggering figure, more and more companies

Improving workplace safety is key to managing the rising rate, he added, boiling the message down to this: "prevent the injury, avoid the associated costs."

Enter KellerOnline® (KOL), a Web site provided by J.J. Keller & Associates Inc. to do just that: to prevent workplace accidents and injuries by helping safety professionals manage their safety process through a structural approach.

Interactive Duty

At its log-in screen, KOL bills itself as "the Internet's only interactive safety manage-

information—and with a variety of customizable training materials for nearly 200 topics, all of which include handouts and quizzes in Spanish, the site strives to cover the safety industry comprehensively. Vaults of short video segments for either management use or employee training are readily accessible on the site. Among its many interactive tools are modules for creating written programs such as safety plans, policies, and procedures; audit programs containing 80 audit checklists covering 600 OSHA and EPA topics, as well as tips and a how-to section; recordkeeping programs offering sundry forms for injury and illness tracking and employee-training maintenance; and chemical programs including a HazCom labeling assistant, an MSDS search database, and a cross-referencing feature that contains the regulatory status of more than 8,000 chemicals.

A large library of in-depth Best Practices articles is available in the site's Learning Center. Elsewhere you can find clip art by the cartload, a variety of customizable training certificates, PowerPoint presentations for downloading, posters for printing, safety games for playing, What's Wrong With This Picture? images for self- or employee-training, and more.

Log On, Tune In, Discuss

Probably the most dynamic of the site's sections is its "Info Exchange" area, which houses a member file exchange feature that invites all KOL subscribers to upload their own slide presentations, images, documents, forms, and other materials for sharing with one another. Within this area, too, is a secure, private Personal Assistant option that allows you to ask a question of KOL specialists and receive a response within one business day. The Info Exchange area also is home to the site's most colorful and lively feature of all, its member discussions boards.

Often practical, usually enlightening, and always candid, the virtual discussions are updated any time a KOL member sends in

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are taking preemptive measures by focusing more resources on workplace safety.

"Managing the significant and growing cost of workplace injuries is a critical challenge facing all companies, regardless of size, industry, and location," Brian Melas, a Liberty Mutual senior vice president of commercial insurance, said in the report.

ment tool." Its use of the word "only" there is arguable, but considering all of the resources it offers inside, it's really more of a capacious toolbox.

Organized by more than 900 topics—which includes its own relevant state and federal regulations, FAQs, ez Explanations®, LOIs, CPLs, and other analytical

a query or response, roughly 200 times a week. The resulting threads reveal a very active/interactive community or think-tank of professionals from all walks of safety. According to Michael J. Honeywell, KOL's senior Internet marketing planner, the site now has more than 10,000 subscribers, but of course not all of them are regular contributors to the discussions. You don't have to lurk long, however, before you get the impression that here are people who know (frequently by regulation number) and love their work.

The breadth and depth of the data on the site are daunting, yet it is easily navigable. Menu buttons remain at the top of almost every KOL screen, and the site's various sections are unusually well linked, with suggestions throughout for doing more exploration and finding further information on-site. That high level of integration is one of the factors contributing to the site's overall user-friendliness.

Other salient features contributing to its usability include the multiple levels of personalization it allows. Subscribers can personalize the site according to their industry, state, and other specific needs, such as the compliance area and date range of the change notices they receive along with their daily news and alerts. Further aiding its functionality, the site clearly divides its industry coverage into four broad regulatory areas—workplace safety, transportation, environment, and employment-related issues—and

includes those categories as a sort of rubric in almost every feature accessed throughout the site.

KOL in a Nutshell

The centerpiece of the site, physically at the front and center on its homepage, is KOL's Safety Management Process. Integrating every facet and area of the site, this guided, four-step process—assess, plan, implement, and review—is designed to enable users to create a wholly customized and formal system for managing safety and health in the workplace, which, according to Honeywell, is the site's *raison d'être*.

"If you're in the business of managing safety, that's your primary goal—you have to figure out how you're going to prevent anyone from getting hurt," he said. "You have to assess all the variables in managing risk, and that's what our solution is designed to do. Our goal is to prevent risk and to keep accidents and injuries from happening. We're putting our chin out there and saying, 'This is a tool that helps you do that. Use this

process to manage safety, and you'll see measurable results.'"

KOL offers a 30-day free trial, with a

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single-user annual subscription to the site currently priced at \$745. Perhaps surprisingly, every KOL member I spoke to considered the rate a bargain, taking into account the services it provides and how the site affects their duties. Subscriber Hector Santiago, corporate EHS manager at MSC Industrial Direct, said having the Personal Assistant feature alone is "like having a several hundred thousand dollar consulting firm" for the annual cost. "I don't see how they can do it," Santiago said. "They're giving away the house for \$745."

KOL-ian Anita Orozco, senior professional in human resources at Air System Components, put it this way: "As they say, 'The best defense is a good offense.' Keller-Online provides the company with an excellent offense." ■

Ronnie Rittenberry is Associate Editor of Occupational Health & Safety.