

## An Overlooked Safety Resource **YOUR OSH SUPPLIER**

By Wesley J. Maertz and Joshua Franklin

**A quick survey of OSH practitioners might show that there is not enough time in the day to solve all safety issues, or that many simply do not have the necessary expertise in every area of their scope of work. The list of pressing safety concerns and questions seems to grow larger every day.**

**If only there was a way** to hire another safety professional or two to help whittle down the to-do list or, better yet, to have a phone-a-friend option to answer challenging safety questions.

### **A Trusted Advisor**

There is no shortage of safety and health challenges in the workplace and they are never the same in topic or scope. The everyday challenge of ensuring a safe and healthy work environment requires OSH professionals to leverage every resource and service available, yet these resources and services are limited by a finite budget. The business case to advance OSH momentum within an organization should be based on well thought-out and justified initiatives, but to make initiatives successful, one must also ensure the efficient use of resources while maintaining productivity and profitability. When facing a safety issue or question, OSH professionals typically think of trusted resources such as insurance brokers and carriers, consultants, colleagues, professional journals, and industry associations. But OSH professionals often overlook their supplier of OSH products and services as a potential trusted advisor.

Most OSH professionals already have a relationship with their safety OSH supplier and have discussed to some extent the daily safety and health challenges they have faced. Quality OSH suppliers often employ a qualified group of subject matter experts who possess practical work experience and have attained accredited safety credentials. Experience and expertise are important. It makes good business sense to engage someone with an accredited certification who also understands how to best use a product or solution; in most cases it does not cost anything. The benefits of a credentialed OSH supplier are twofold. First, a relationship with someone who understands the business operations is already established. Also, these individuals have demonstrated that they meet a foundational level of professionalism and possess expertise that can be trusted.

### **Case Study: A Slip, Trip, Fall Initiative**

Consider the challenge of slip, trips and falls (STF) faced by HCA Healthcare, a Fortune 100 healthcare organization with more than 150 hospital locations. The organization implemented a large safety improvement initiative to reduce STFs. The initiative was targeted at increasing awareness, preventing employee injuries, minimizing risk and reducing significant workers' compensation costs related to STF incidents. This large, time-intensive initiative aimed to reduce the number of STFs occurring at all the organization's locations. HCA struggled with identifying appropriate prevention activities to address these hazards. The organization turned to its supplier of OSH products, Grainger, with which it had a long-standing, established relationship. HCA's safety manager leveraged the safety products, resources and services to perform joint reviews of the organization's safety metrics, regulatory compliance status, workers' compensation information, and existing safety program challenges to define goals and plan a road map of the details to implement a multisite, national STF-reduction program. Custom support tools such as training packages, hazard identification checklists and hazard mitigation tool kits were designed to support this program. Joint communication and awareness webinars were held to coordinate the rollout of the program, set success parameters and establish key program milestones. The supplier also provided a safety services and solutions team of field safety specialists, many of whom held CSP or safety trained supervisor certifications, to support HCA's initiative on

location. The field safety specialists collaborated with local hospitals to identify, assess and advise on control measures to reduce potential STF incidents. When customized approaches were needed, the field safety specialist on location coordinated with suppliers to identify, assess and control not only STF hazards, but also other hazards such as spills, working at heights and rooftop fall risks.

The supplier shared the status of program execution, key successes and challenges with the HCA corporate team throughout the program's deployment and beyond to measure success and to ensure the program's long-term sustainability. While the STF incident and workers' compensation metrics over the course of the program are still being collected and reviewed, early assessments of leading indicators such as communication meetings, proactive assessments and solution options show promise.

Quality OSH suppliers can help in the areas of on site assessments or audits, training, or program development, and can tackle nearly any initiative or safety challenge in the workplace.

### **Conclusion**

At times, addressing and solving the most important safety and health issues can be time-consuming and frustrating. From complex multisite issues to single-site support, OSH supply companies often provide more than just products. Many can offer accredited experts and expertise, resources, and services to help drive the success of various OSH initiatives. The next time you have a need for safety initiative support or program enhancements, or simply have a question concerning an unfamiliar hazard, consider your OSH supplier as a trusted resource. **PSJ**

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