

Case Study **HEARTLAND**

How DEKRA Adaptive Suite Helped an Agribusiness
Implement Safety in a Time of Rapid Growth





Heartland Co-op, a Midwest grain cooperative, has continually focused on growth and unification to provide its customers with the best products, services and, most importantly, leverage in the grain market.

The cooperative faced challenges resulting from the rapid growth in facilities, machinery, hardware, and employees — all which come with the responsibility to manage, maintain, and keep them safe.

Safety Director Bill Chizek, tasked with overseeing Heartland Co-op's safety and compliance programs for its 71 locations said leadership was "having a difficult time" organizing all the paperwork required by such fast growth.

"We were growing faster than I could keep up," he said.

Luckily, the cooperative had access to the DEKRA Adaptive Suite, but at the time was using it only for OSHA 300A reports. It took the intervention of a DEKRA consultant to show leadership how the software could help lead growth.

DEKRA Adaptive Suite was first used to identify Heartland Co-op's need for a complete system in helping scale its safety programs and help manage the paperwork. "We needed a system for tracking government reporting, Maintenance Systems type information and, of course, our BBS observations," said Chizek. "The need for this program was to track and bring reporting information back out to employees and management."

As is common with many organizations, a significant amount of time and effort is put into collecting information needed in order to create safer work environments. However, this

information is not efficiently or effectively disseminated.

First Step for DEKRA Adaptive Suite: Maintenance Systems

In an effort to improve lines of communication and create efficient, effective, and engaging ownership in the safety programs, leadership put a plan in place. The cooperative began implementing DEKRA Adaptive Suite into specific aspects of its safety programs.

Heartland Co-op started with the Maintenance Systems piece of DEKRA Adaptive Suite and then moved into incident reporting, such as claims and near misses. As the employees grew familiar with each component and program, the cooperative continued to execute full implementation of

nearly every application within DEKRA Adaptive Suite, which also led to the implementation of a Behavior-Based Safety (BBS) program.

When creating this kind of change within an organization's operations and everyday culture, engaging employees and building strong communication from top to bottom are key. The safety director explained that the greatest barrier was getting employees to feel comfortable using the system.

"We knew it was going to work from the start because we were going to push hard not to fail. Getting key employees involved also helped with the process. We picked around 10 key employees to help promote it," Chizek said.

Using DEKRA Adaptive Suite to Make Smarter Business Decisions

After gradually implementing different aspects of safety in the DEKRA Adaptive Suite for more than eight years, Heartland Co-op built an expectation around the system and its programs.

"Our safety culture has definitely changed for the better. Everyone in our company understands they have certain responsibilities for DEKRA Adaptive Suite and safety within our company," Chizek said.

By organizing the information more efficiently over dozens of locations, the cooperative can now communicate expectations more effectively, which improves the operational side of the business as well.

"We are able to pull data from DEKRA Adaptive Suite to help us make business decisions and training programs to help reduce our TIR type numbers and keep our MOD rates low," he said. "We have improved on our operational side when it

comes to Maintenance Systems and tracking expenses and inventory materials."

In order for safety programs to be successful, data collected has to be analyzed, communicated, and acted upon. Using an integrated management system helps create the efficiencies to do those things in the most effective manner, and it shows. Since implementing the system, the cooperative has been able to maintain an annual TIR rate of 2.25 or lower, including one low of 0.75.

However, leadership is not complacent and continues to strive for improvement. Chizek is excited about the future commitment to success with plans for continual improvement.

"Hopefully, we'll keep expanding the usage. Our whole upper-management team is on board, and the communication piece is important," Chizek said. Having every location connected through the alert system "is key to the success of this program," he said.

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