

DEKRA
SAFETY MANAGEMENT
SYSTEMS



Empowering Employees Through Safety

Case Study: MFA

From its roots, MFA has always been about the people. MFA was founded in 1914 when seven farm families met and agreed to work together in leveraging larger orders of farming supplies for stronger buying power. With MFA's vast growth, it now leverages this buying power along with expanding the reach of its commodities to much larger markets for its more than 45,000 members throughout the Midwest. Since MFA has grown so rapidly, so has the portfolio of its products and services. As a farmer/member owned agricultural cooperative, MFA supplies, manufactures and markets a wide variety of name brand and top-quality plant and crop products/services.

Because MFA provides such a wide array of agricultural products and services, its number of employees and the risk they encounter on a daily basis have grown as well. Not only does MFA employ a larger number of people, but these employees are working in some of the most dangerous lines of work in the U.S. According to a study done by EHS Today on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, MFA employs workers in an industry with two of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. in 2019 (#8 – Farmers, Ranchers and Agricultural Managers, #7 – Truck Drivers and Other Drivers). As an organization looking for continuous ways to improve and provide the best and safest place to work for their employees, MFA sought the help of DEKRA in bringing a program that would truly engage the employees in the effort to increase safety and reduce risk.

SITUATION

Before seeking DEKRA's program, MFA had a solid safety program and processes in place. Employee safety was a priority and their injury rates were on par or even slightly below industry average, but had become stagnant and were not lowering. Management saw room for improvement and wanted to dedicate focus on making sure every employee went home safely to their families every day. Before implementation started, management was fully dedicated to committing support and funds necessary for a program that would lower injury rates and reduce injury severity in the workplace.

With commitment to a new program established, Diana McCartney, Safety Coordinator at MFA, was tasked with researching Behavior-Based Safety (BBS) programs to bring more accountability and employee empowerment to the current safety programs in place. "We went with DEKRA because they had already implemented a BBS program in about 10 other farm cooperatives and after contacting some of those companies, it seemed to be working very well for them." Along with researching and picking the program to implement, Diana took it into her own hands to make sure management was prepared for the commitment it would take both financially and motivationally on their end. "I wanted to ensure management was prepared for barriers and empowering employees was not something we had done in the past."

SOLUTION

MFA had full commitment from upper management and the only thing left to do was design and implement the program. They decided to implement the Behavior-Based Safety program along with tracking their safety observations and incidents in DEKRA's Insight Via™ Safety Management System.

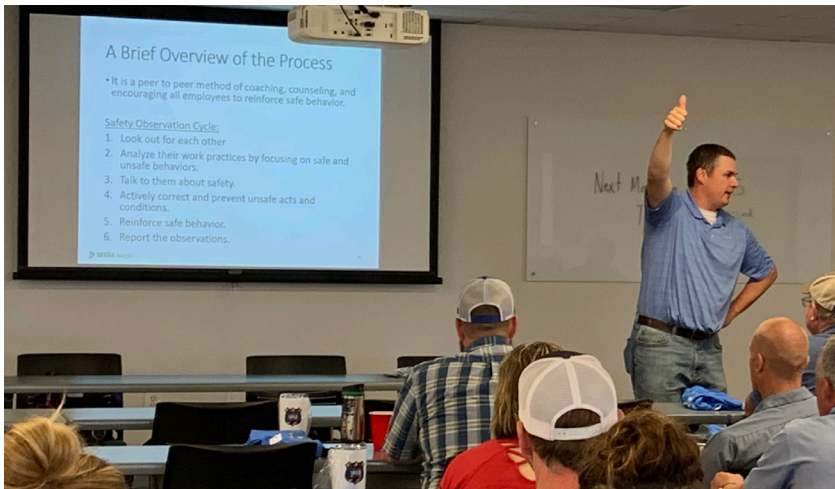
The structure of DEKRA's BBS process is designed to fulfill the intentions and goals set forth by each individual organization along with giving management the data and communication structure to effectively make changes and remove risk in an efficient manner. By including front line workers and location managers in the design process, the program gives the employees the opportunity to establish ownership in the safety of themselves, their peers, and their workplace.

MFA started by selecting a steering committee comprised of the people in the company that were well respected, busy, and seemed to care about their co-workers. Once this committee was hand selected, DEKRA consultants and the members met for 4 days and mapped out the program. This meant everything from giving the program its own name (S.H.I.E.L.D.), creating a scope of realistic and desired outcomes, mapping the operational processes and follow-up essential to effective risk identification and removal, as well as establishing when and how to effectively conduct peer-to-peer safety conversations. The committee agreed that each location would initially train a smaller group of observers to establish engagement and familiarity with the program in order to work out any kinks and provide the groundwork to adjust the program for optimal success.



Diana explained that there were some barriers that came along with the initial implementation, "At first, those that were not trained were somewhat skeptical of the process. The key to the process is to get the location managers engaged. If they are engaged and see the benefit, then so do their employees." The program is based around holding safety conversations with each other, looking out for one another and it's completely owned by the employees with the full support of management. DEKRA consultants visited each site and trained the groups, introducing them to BBS and teaching them how and when to effectively conduct safety observations and how to report barriers they were encountering to safety conduct tasks.

RESULTS



Diana and the MFA organization noticed changes happening in the organization quickly. Within the first year MFA knew the program was impacting the way their employees were working and creating a safer work environment, "After the first 9 months when we saw the cost of injuries dropped by a significant amount. We got everyone trained and everyone started having safety conversations." After piloting the program with small groups at each location, MFA saw huge results and had all employees trained within those first 9 months.

By training all employees, MFA gave the power to each and every individual to make a difference in the organization. Peer-to-peer safety conversations paired with the technology is opening doors for removing barriers to safety and building a safety culture of inclusion with a true sense of "watching out for your neighbor". Not only is MFA seeing reduced overall cost of injuries, reduced number of lost time days and a reduction in severity of those injuries, but the communication within the organization has vastly improved. Employees now have a channel for making change within the organization says Diana, "We see better communication, improved moral and more of a team approach to safety."

The program is now an integral part of everyday work at MFA. Observer training has now been integrated and is scheduled as part of new employee onboarding. The program continues to improve as they work with DEKRA to fulfill the mission of sending every employee home safely, every day.

For more information on how DEKRA can help you develop a customized BBS program or implement a Safety Management System into your current safety programs, visit us at www.dekra.us/sms or email us at sms.na@dekra.com.