

May 24, 2005

To: Commission on Behavioral Applications

From: Bill Hopkins and Dwight Harshbarger

Re: Site visit and recommendations

On May 2 – 3, 2005, we visited the SuperValu Distribution Center in Oglesby, Illinois for purposes of a review for CCBS Accreditation.

Recommendation to the CCBS Commission on Behavioral Applications

We recommend to the Cambridge Center's Commission on Behavioral Applications that the Principles of Behavior-Based Safety (PBBS) program of Advantage Logistics in Oglesby, Illinois, be accredited for a period of two years, with this recommendation conditional on now completed revisions of the application.

General Observations:

Most importantly, the PBBS program is effective. There has been a progressive and sustained improvement in both the OSHA-R rate and the severity rate. A number of lines of evidence argue that these data are accurate. Not only are the site safety data better than they were prior to the beginning of the PBBS program, they are consistently much better than the Bureau of Labor Statistics data for their industry. In addition, the data are now consistently better than data from one comparable site within the company that once had a better safety record than Advantage Logistics.

Visits in the center indicate that the program is operational. It has enthusiastic leadership. It is being carried out consistently by many people and there is very good supervisory and management support for the program. Further, the workers' support for the program is exemplary. The workers consistently stated their beliefs in the program and appreciation for its existence. Similarly, there is strong support for the program among senior managers. It is a positive program with support and participation at all levels of the organization. People talk about a safety culture and a sense of family that is, at least partly, attributable to the PBBS program.

Injury reporting and investigations appear to be excellent and the results of investigations are reliably turned into new methods for performance improvement. Many safe and unsafe behaviors have been identified and worked into the program. The workers were observed to frequently, but not perfectly, engage in the identified safe behaviors.

The data on workplace injuries and illnesses are validated by corporate review and analysis and by testimonials of the workers, a few of whom have reported on-the-job injuries.

Recommendations:

Our recommendations are made in the spirit of striving to improve on an already good program.

There is one strong recommendation and several additional optional recommendations. The strong recommendation will simply augment practices already in place. The optional recommendations can be acted on at the discretion of the site.

- Strong Recommendation:

The time lag between observations and data-based (including graphic charts) feedback to workers, supervisors, and managers should be reduced.

The development and use of a data system that speeds processing and leads to short turnaround and the rapid use of data is important. Much research tells us that long time lags between observation and feedback often weakens the power of the feedback while short lags increase its power.

Your challenge is to get safety performance feedback to the people who have been observed and to otherwise act on what the observational data tell you as quickly as possible. There are many ways this can be done and the exact method is left up to the site staff.

- Optional Recommendations: These are not listed in any particular order.

1. There are still occasional reportable injuries. Look for ways to drive the rate of these to zero.
2. The ways in which observers interact with workers over observed safe and unsafe behaviors is limited. The site staff may wish to contact Mike Ballard and B. H. Collins or Chuck Pennington (mballard@voridian.com, bcollins@voridian.com, cpennington@voridian.com) at the Acetate Fibers Division, Voridian Division, Eastman Chemicals, Kingsport, Tennessee, to learn about their extensive collection of ways to use observations.
3. Workers could be involved as observers. The training for this is simple and there are a number of potential benefits from doing it.

4. Supervisory or management staff members who carry out observations should occasionally do the jobs they observe. This suggestion came from workers who made it in the spirit of believing that such a practice would help observers better understand the conditions in which work is being done. This is probably correct but it also has considerable potential to lead to more and better safe work behaviors.

In our de-briefing session, you indicated that this was already being done. However, the fact the fact that workers suggested it leads us to recommend that you re-visit how this process is being carried out.

5. Important gains can come from encouraging systematic reporting and investigating near-misses and minor injuries. This could result in identification of additional important safe and unsafe behaviors and correctable hazards.
6. People who have been injured on the job can teach fellow and sister workers on how they were injured and how such injuries can be avoided. Doing this so that it adds to the sense of community in the center would seem to be well within the reach of the site staff and workers.
7. The coaching methods should be revisited with an eye to improving them. This is a passed-on suggestion from a worker and does not result from actual observations by the site visit team.
8. The method of using two people to move an empty pallet can be improved. The site visit team observed that workers did not always call for a second person to help move an empty pallet. Therefore, the recommended safe practice is not being reliably followed. Perhaps an ergonomics expert would have suggestions for safely moving pallets. Perhaps staff can invent improvements on the methods.
9. An ergonomics expert should be brought in as a consultant to observe current work practices and identify any that may contribute to ergonomics problems.
10. The site visitors observed several instances of poorly stacked boxes on incoming pallets and incoming pallets that were in poor condition. Center staff may wish to develop some method for working with suppliers to try to improve on this
11. The pre-shift meeting observed by the site visitors aroused little interest and almost no participation on the parts of the workers. There are many ways such meetings can be improved. For example

- The staff members leading the meetings could set an objective of achieving at least one widely-shared laugh during each meeting.
- Staff could involve the workers in demonstrating and reporting.
- Generally, leaders could demonstrate rather than talk about their recommendations.
- Meeting leaders could follow workers onto the floor at the end of a meeting to observe if workers practice what has just been suggested.
- Related to the above, following through and giving workers some immediate feedback on whether they are behaving as recommended would probably help compliance.
- The site visitors are not exercise experts but one of them has been told by an exercise physiologist that it is necessary to hold stretches for thirty seconds in order to get good benefit from them. Check this out with an expert.

12. Look for ways to extend what the PPBS program is doing to other places. There are many opportunities for doing this:

- Help the corporation influence other similar distribution centers in SuperValu
- Help the corporation influence non-distribution-center parts of the company
- Become a demonstration, training, and information site for the company
- Offer to become a consulting arm for similar operations in other parts of SuperValu
- Help non-retail industries develop programs like the one at Advantage Logistics. One obvious opportunity exists at such places as nursing homes where lifting is a frequent work practice and a source of injuries. There are numerous other opportunities