Cambridge Center for Behavior Studies
Safety Re-Accreditation Site Visit Report

Site: Supervalu (MRDC)
501 N. Malick Road
Oglesby, IL  61348

Date of Visit: September 14, 2010 (6:30am – 3:00pm)

Auditors: Mark Alavosius, Ph.D., (Chairperson of Team), John Austin, Ph.D.
Commission on Behavioral Safety, Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies

Schedule of Events:

6:30 A.M. - 7:30 A.M.  Facility Tour
Supervisor Jessica Beem and Sandy Knott

7:30 A.M. to 8:30 A.M.  Introduction & Review of Site Visit Procedures
MRDC Staff Members, Don Kernan, Sandy Knott, Duane Burnette,
Sharon DeJohn, Tim B. Thompson, Pam Menerey, Karen Fouth
Corporate Regional Risk Control Director: Steve Love

8:30 A.M. - 9:30 A.M.  Tagalong observations with CAM observers - time in warehouse

9:30 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.  Recordkeeping/Data Review
Sandy Knott, Steve Love, Erin Lavens

10:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.  Meeting with randomly chosen group of production workers

11:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.  Lunch with MRDC team

12:00 P.M. - 12:15 P.M.  Weekly CAM Feedback meeting in break room

12:15 P.M. to 1:15 P.M.  Meeting with CAM Team members

1:15 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.  Time for Dr. Alavosius and Dr. Austin to meet and discuss their observations

2:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.  Discussion and wrap up meeting with MRDC management team

Summary:

CCBS commissioners toured the distribution center, examined recent data, reviewed management procedures for
the BBS process, and assessed employees’ knowledge and use of the system. Our observations of on-site
operations validate the data and indicate that the BBS program as described in the application operates
effectively. Further, the program meets the 3 basic criteria of the Commission on Behavioral Applications for BBS
Accreditation: 1) it is a behavioral program, 2) the BBS program has had a visible impact on safety performance,
and 3) the program has produced sustained positive performance over 3 or more years.

This Supervalu distribution center initiated a behavior-based safety process in 2000 and elaborated it in 2001 by
rollout of its CAM Process (Critical Activities Management). CAM is an observation system driven by evaluation of
the center’s injury data-base. Behavioral observations are used to provide employees with feedback and track
progress on behavioral safety goals. The CAM process was effective and the facility first earned accreditation by
the CCBS in July, 2005. In 2006 the workforce at the center increased substantially due to business expansion. This influx of new workers taxed the capacity of the BBS system and elevated incidence rates of OSHA recordable and disabling injuries were noted. Numerous adjustments were made to the CAM/BBS system (these are detailed in the application report) and these appear effective in re-establishing low incidence rates. Data from 2008, 2009, and 2010 indicate sustained performance of their BBS system.

The evidence observed during the visit indicates that the workforce at the Oglesby distribution center is executing the procedures described in their application for accreditation. Data are verifiable and current and indicate a safety process that has resulted in sustained control of at risk behaviors and a low rate of incidents. Sandy Knott impressed us as a hands-on safety manager with a command of the BBS process. She enjoys enthusiastic support from all we met during our visit. The management systems (e.g., data collection, data entry, analysis, reporting) and training appear responsive to the safety needs of the workforce. The BBS process is part of a comprehensive safety program that manages the safety of employees and integrates well with operations (several items on the BBS checklist are focused on improving operational behaviors).

The distribution center encompasses 308,000 square feet. Employees may encounter hazards created by the receipt, storage and distribution of vast quantities of merchandise and operation of powered equipment. Behavioral risks include ergonomic exposures from material handling, use of box cutters, and exposure to flying/falling objects. We viewed various operations and spoke with employees about the BBS system. The following strengths were notable:

1. The leadership at the site seems to really ‘get’ behavior. They routinely seek employee input, and people from management and associate teams feel comfortable making suggestions and speaking up. The Plant Manager, Don Kernan, went through Pick-lite training this summer on the hottest day, as if he were a new employee. His direct contact with operations was apparent.
2. They seem to seek, attend to, and then reiterate success stories resulting from their process. We heard many during the day, and these stories form a sort of lore that people can point to, that shows success of the program.
   - One interesting spin-off is a ‘green initiative’ increasing re-cycling of waste cardboard and product packing. We regard it as a worthy extension of their behavior management efforts.
3. The Operations Manager (Duane Burnette) and Plant Manager (Don Kernan) seem to be very supportive of stopping production for safety matters, so that communication is clear and absolute. This probably makes a huge difference in terms of getting the message out. We did not encounter anyone at the site who was unaware of the BBS program, nor did we meet anyone who was negative on the program (surprisingly).
4. We observed employees give out wooden nickels to others who engaged in safe behavior (a reinforcement system suggested by Bill Hopkins).
5. We observed people give out stars for the same reasons.
6. Many, many, people say thank you for... <insert safe behavior here>. The positive interactions among employees suggest their peer observations are well-established and focused on behavioral risks.
7. They use a ‘white board’ for employees to write questions about anything. Even joking questions appear to be taken with the utmost seriousness. The leaders seem to treat these questions as opportunities to reinforce upward communication – this is a real strength of the leadership at the site.
8. They explained to us a program for managers that involved an electronic white board to be used in a similar manner, but we did not hear about how well that is working. It sounds like a great idea and chance for anonymous upward feedback.
9. A replenisher was asked by one of the commissioners what he would tell a new employee just starting on the job. He said he’d say, ‘slow down and take your time’ – the speed will come. This un-coached response was an example of the positive safety culture at the site. It would not be hard to imagine a site that emphasizes productivity (speed) over safety, especially at the associate level.
10. We heard the story of the maintenance crew developing a solution to rolling truck doors coming down unexpectedly. They developed an arm that we observed in the receiving area. It prevents the doors on trailer boxes from rolling down; and the company is now seeking to patent it. Great idea.
Don Kernan said one of the most important aspects of a leader and his team is doing what you say you’re going to do. The leaders at the site seem to have time enough in their schedules to develop and maintain the relationships with their people.

- They have developed a simulated work environment for training. One purpose is to re-train workers returning to work after an injury (work hardening). This can become a huge asset to safety and operations in the future.
- Operations and safety are tightly integrated. The operations manager is a very active partner in safety, and we saw no evidence of pushback or competition between risk control and operations.
- The CAM observation sheet structures employees to observe and score the safety of 6 critical behaviors. These six are identified by analysis of the injury data. An additional 20 behavioral objectives are noted on the back of the form. These 20 are previous targets of the CAM observers; it’s indicative of the development process being used to refine the BBS process.
- The CAM observation database appears to be well-organized and able to quickly generate a number of useful reports.
- The facility uses a peer mentoring process to incorporate new hires into the plant’s work culture. The system appears effective in maintaining positive communication and adherence with safety procedures.
- The employees appeared equipped with appropriate PPE (eye protection) and tools (box cutters) appropriate to their jobs.
- The BBS program is promoted with a variety of media (posters, video). The break room, for example, displays an array of materials indicating commitment to the BBS system.
- The facility uses an incentive campaign (“Dr. Bill’s 2 Per Day”). Employees are provided tokens exchangeable for snacks if they conduct observations and provide feedback. This appears to be a popular program. We saw no evidence this would suppress reporting of injuries or hazards.

**Future Challenges:**

- The center’s work force is currently stabilized after a dramatic expansion in 2006. A number of initiatives (e.g., mentorship process, ABC analyses, brainstorming meetings, incentive plan) were employed to incorporate the new hires into the facility’s culture. These appear complex as they entail many inter-related and moving parts. Some might be faded systematically once sustained performance in safety and operations are institutionalized and additional shocks to the system are unlikely.
- The potential transition to a pay-for-performance compensation model might de-stabilize the balance currently established within this work force. Maintenance of the elements noted above might prove useful in inter-locking behaviors across the work force should different pay schemes be required. The management team used many tactics to shape cooperation among the employees. A new pay scheme might undermine the willingness of some to slow production and attend to safety issues (e.g., a power lift operator stopping to pick up litter). Those tactics (mentoring, brain-storming) may prove useful in mitigating the potential adverse effects of pay-for-performance on safety.

**Recommendations:**

- The Supervalu (MRDC) BBS program appears to be a properly designed, well-run behavior-based safety system. It has sustained safety behavior and corresponding decreases in injuries and illnesses. It is highly recommended that the current operations be supported so that they continue.
- Options for incorporating the management processes at this center throughout Supervalu’s workforce should be further examined. One possibility raised during our visit was for this center to become a training site for personnel from other distribution centers. This might be structured as an internship program in which supervisors/managers would learn the positive management procedures and practices in this facility (for both safety & operations). We saw considerable merit in this idea as the plant offers skilled managers, sustained safety performance along with enhanced productivity, and a proven track record in managing growth.
BBS operations are challenging to develop, implement, and manage. Sandy Knott, the facility’s management team, and the workers impressed us with their expertise, enthusiasm, and effectiveness. They were challenged by a large influx of new workers (“the 2006 flood”) and took active steps to stabilize their operations. We recommend that Supervalu extend the BBS system to their other operations (both distribution centers, and other operations) as the program is clearly effective in improving safety practices. The materials developed at this site offer a replicable technology for disseminating this system. However, this extension must be done with care, as BBS processes such as MRDC’s run on positive “relationships” between key personnel, and these relationships take time to develop. In this regard, rushing and/or forcing implementation of BBS throughout the organization could be a mistake.

It was unclear how associates who are not on the safety teams get data shared with them. Perhaps this happens verbally at the CAM celebrations (as we observed during our visit), but how often that occurs is unclear.

- In many BBS processes, graphic data are posted in prominent places, so employees can see the results of behavioral observations over time. We did not see anything like this, and in fact did not see any behavioral observations graphed.
- It is also unclear which data are regularly shared with associates – is it only injury data?

We recommend that behavioral data (measures of targeted safety behaviors observed) be shared routinely with associates. The CAM database appears able to generate these graphics.

Contact any of the CCBS Commissioners should you want advice on future developments. We noted and appreciated this group’s commitment to continuous learning and we applaud their efforts.

Conclusion:

It was a pleasure to tour this facility and view the performance of the CAM team and managers. Our impression was that people were open to showing all of what they do. The site visit suggests that they are indeed running an effective BBS process that weathered a rough patch when their workforce grew. Our recommendation to the CCBS is for re-accreditation of the Supervalu (MRDC) BBS program operated in Oglesby, IL.

This recommendation was approved unanimously on September 17, 2010. The Supervalu BBS program at the Oglesby, IL distribution center is accredited for three years (September 2010 – August 2013).

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Alavosius, Ph.D. John Austin, Ph.D.
Trustee Trustee
Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies
Chair of Accreditation Team Chair of Accreditation Team

CCBS Contact information:

Mark Alavosius                marka@unr.edu
John Austin                  john.austin@wmich.edu
Tim Ludwig                   ludwigtd@appstate.edu
Dwight Harshbarger           dwight.harshbarger@gmail.com

CCBS
Phil Chase                  pnchase@gmail.com