

Safety Training for Seasonal Help

Premier Ag turns to ResponsibleAg when training seasonal workers on safety and compliance practices

Each spring in farm country, “Help Wanted” signs go up and the call for workers hits the airwaves. As the busy production season looms, retailers and farmers search for seasonal help to lend a hand with nutrient application, planting and pest control.

Increasingly, experienced help is hard to find. That’s why careful screening during hiring and thorough training are job one for Tom Wenning, Operations Manager, and his team at Premier Ag in Salem and Corydon, Indiana.

“Seasonal help doubles our workforce each year,” Wenning says. “The people we hire range from ages 18 to 70, and their experience in agriculture ranges from none to those who help us year after year. It is important we invest the time and effort to ensure they’re all up to speed on safety practices and daily checks required in their jobs.”

Keeping seasonal employees safe begins with good choices

How does Wenning get his team of recent high school graduates, college students, over-the-road truckers, laid-off

laborers and retired folks up to speed to prevent injuries and incidences? He begins with careful screening and testing during the hiring process.

“When we’re hiring, we pair each applicant with an experienced employee who walks them through the responsibilities of the job they’re interviewing for. Our full-time employees are all well trained using ResponsibleAg guidelines and know what is expected, so they explain things correctly.

“They cover best practices for equipment operation with the potential new hires,” Wenning says. “We don’t put employees in situations where they aren’t comfortable. Those who will run forklifts must successfully operate the forklift, and truck drivers must take a road test.”



TOM WENNING
Operations Manager
in Salem and
Corydon, Indiana

Onboarding involves thorough training by experienced employees

Once employees are hired, they are trained on hazardous waste operations and emergency response to prepare them if anything would go wrong. On-the-job training continues, with a full-time employee



showing the new hire how to do things correctly – from daily plant or equipment inspections to moving and stacking chemical totes and seed boxes.

Safety training doesn’t stop once the work begins. Regularly, experienced and seasonal employees are trained on timely topics related to the work being done or conditions employees may encounter. Heat stress is a typical topic in July.

ResponsibleAg is resource for year-round training

Wenning and Jerry Boger, Safety Coordinator for Premier Ag, rely on ResponsibleAg for training resources such as the Compliance Assistance Library, which summarizes regulations in laymen’s terms, making the information easier to understand. Wenning likes how easy the online system is to use whether training seasonal or year-round employees.

“ResponsibleAg covers the topics we need to consider for our specific

“The ResponsibleAg Compliance Assistance Library summarizes regulations in laymen’s terms, so the information is easy to understand, and it has concise summaries that can be printed as handouts.” – Tom Wenning

Premier Ag is a division of Premier Companies, a farmer-owned cooperative founded in 1927 and headquartered in Seymour, Indiana.

ers access to a collection of tools they can use to teach employees safe practices and job responsibilities related to compliance with federal regulations. Some of the most applicable for employee training are the Compliance Assistance Library, EZ Search, industry-standard resources and links to federal agency websites.

Awareness of required recordkeeping is another benefit of ResponsibleAg

Accurate and consistent recordkeeping is an integral part of many of the regulatory requirements from OSHA, DOT, DHS and EPA. Premier Ag joined ResponsibleAg in late 2016, and participation has not only improved safety practices, but also has made the team more aware of necessary recordkeeping.

“Especially in the spring, it’s hard to get out of the office with the phone ringing constantly and lots to do,” Wenning says. “My best advice is to make the time to do regular walk arounds of your facility.

“Stuff breaks. Things wear out. Do your regular inspections. Record the process on the required forms and write down what needs attention, so it’s not forgotten. This is all important when you’re accountable for keeping everyone at your facility safe,” he says.

For more information or to join, visit www.ResponsibleAg.org or call 270-683-6777.



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