



Two Hats — Twice the Impact on Safety

Layton does double duty as Safety and Environment Manager and ResponsibleAg Accredited Auditor

When Mike Layton completes a ResponsibleAg Compliance Program assessment for a GROWMARK FS retail facility, he immediately hangs up his auditor hat and dons his Safety and Environment Manager hat.

Since 2004, the Delaware native has been responsible for safety and environmental compliance for 38 GROWMARK FS locations serving growers in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia and 10 Seedway locations stretching from Vermont to Florida. Layton took the ResponsibleAg Auditor Training Course in February of 2017, but he wouldn't call himself an early adopter.

"When the ResponsibleAg Compliance Program was launched,

we didn't intend to sign up because I thought the program was for facilities that handle anhydrous ammonia and ammonium nitrate. Our locations don't handle those products," Layton explains. He took a 'wait and see' approach, but after several of his industry peers shared their experiences, his interest was sparked.

By December 2016, the GROWMARK, Inc. locations had all signed on to participate in the ResponsibleAg Certification Program. Layton went to auditor training, which was a turning point for him. With nearly 15 years of experience in safety and environment compliance, Layton believed he knew and understood the many federal regulations impacting GROWMARK FS facilities.



MIKE LAYTON
Manager of Safety and Environment,
GROWMARK FS, LLC

"During the auditor training we discussed the issues as a group and that was very beneficial and helped me further my understanding," Layton says. "The group interaction allowed us to share new ideas that I could take back with me."

Auditor Training Brings Better Understanding of Regulations

Layton remembers three simple-to-remedy issues he learned about through the course that would help improve their level of compliance.

- Better confined space identification
- Improved lock-out, tag-out practices
- Documentation of all regulatory training

"We knew we had confined spaces, but we learned there may be better ways to label and clearly mark them," says Layton. "For example, a facility with storage tanks that are equipped with manholes are considered confined spaces. Affixing the warning label on the manhole cover seems like a good idea because it is where a worker would most likely enter the tank. The warning label becomes useless when the manhole cover is removed and can no longer be seen."



According to Brian Miller, lead instructor for the ResponsibleAg Auditor Course, becoming an auditor typically affects the way a person views documentation. He notes most organizations provide annual training but they fail to document who attended and other required information. Layton adds, "We were missing some sign-in sheets that would give us credit for some extra training that we hadn't realized would be part of the audit."

Helping Facilities Become Compliant

As an internal auditor with GROWMARK FS, Layton conducts each audit objectively, as if he were a contract auditor.

"After I finish an audit, I become the safety officer again — a resource for the facility, and my job is to say, 'here is what I can do to help you correct issues and become compliant,'" Layton explains. "Compliance shortfalls are written up in the assessment, but I carry things like exit signs and other items in my vehicle to leave with the facility. This gives them something in their corrective action plan to check off right away. Being an auditor helps me be a better safety manager."

"Voluntary participation in ResponsibleAg shows regulators and the public that our industry follows the rules because we are committed to doing a good job." — Mike Layton

2,000th ResponsibleAg Audit Completed at GROWMARK FS

To date, audits have been completed at 25 of the 38 GROWMARK FS locations. The Bridgeton, New Jersey, location is noteworthy as the 2,000th facility to complete the ResponsibleAg audit.

GROWMARK FS, LLC has 38 facilities serving growers in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.



Layton believes the self-policing nature of the program demonstrates the industry's commitment to safety, the environment and communities.

"Voluntary participation in ResponsibleAg shows regulators and the public that our industry follows the rules because we are committed to doing a good job," Layton says.

Support from GROWMARK Inc., Important to Compliance

Layton credits the support of GROWMARK, Inc., in helping GROWMARK FS and other GROWMARK retail locations become fully on board with the ResponsibleAg Certification Program.

Rod Wells, Crop Nutrients Division Manager, for GROWMARK, Inc., was a member of the ResponsibleAg board when the initiative was first launched in 2014.

"We believe participating in ResponsibleAg is an opportunity to set our organization apart from others in the industry through an even greater level of commitment to the safety of our communities and employees. Investing in internal auditors like Mike is just one part of this commitment," Wells says. GROWMARK was one of the initial wholesale fertilizer members of ResponsibleAg, and today all GROWMARK-owned retail locations participate in the ResponsibleAg Compliance Program. GROWMARK, Inc., currently has five internal auditors trained and credentialed through ResponsibleAg, and they complete more than 50 compliance audits per year.

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

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ResponsibleAg is an industry-led initiative **committed** to helping agribusinesses properly store and handle farm input supplies. The program helps members ensure they are **compliant** with environmental, health, safety and security regulations to keep employees, customers and our communities **safe**.



GROWMARK FS, LLC in Bridgeton, New Jersey is the 2,000th location to complete the ResponsibleAg Compliance Audit.