

FACES OF



GROWMARK

Leading, Not Lagging, On Safety

ResponsibleAg gives rise to leading indicators of safety success for 150 locations.



For GROWMARK Inc., in Bloomington, IL, and its FS Companies system, participation in the ResponsibleAg Certification Program is revealing leading indicators of improved safety.

When assessing performance, there are two types of measurements: leading indicators, which may predict future success or failure, and lagging indicators, which measure past performance. While a lagging indicator can record only what has happened, a leading indicator can be used to influence change.

For Kevin Frye and the safety department at GROWMARK Inc. in Bloomington, IL, the organization's level of participation in the ResponsibleAg program is giving rise to several leading indicators of improved safety for the regional agricultural supply cooperative and its FS Companies system.

"The frequency and consistency of things such as completing safety training for new and experienced workers, conducting routine workplace inspections, effective equipment maintenance, safety acumen of supervisors, organization of records and facility pride are leading indicators of the trend toward improved safety throughout our organization," says Frye, GROWMARK's Safety Services Manager. "There is a strong emphasis on effectively implementing safety protocols. Our people have been receptive, and those factors will translate into fewer losses over time."

Such success is why Frye serves on both the ResponsibleAg board of directors and its technical committee. Launched in 2014, ResponsibleAg is an industry-led initiative committed to helping agribusinesses ensure compliance with environmental, health and safety (EHS) and security regulations

to keep employees, customers and communities safe. The initiative offers a systematic approach to facility evaluation, recommendations for improvements and a comprehensive collection of resources members can turn to for information and education.

Big picture protocol

With roughly 150 locations operating across multiple states, GROWMARK has implemented the ResponsibleAg program in phases, putting locations on a three-year rotation.

Frye and his safety team are credentialed ResponsibleAg auditors and conduct audits according to the program's protocols. "We do about 50 audits a year, and currently, about 90 of our locations have been certified," Frye explains.

He says employees at GROWMARK and FS facilities became receptive to the auditing process once they understood the big picture of the ResponsibleAg program.

"At first, there were some questions. They didn't understand why we needed something over and above what we were already doing," Frye says. "But once they really experienced the program and understood that it's no longer just about internal company expectations but what we want as an industry, they really embraced it. It's really become a sense of pride for our locations to become certified."

Going beyond compliance

Some locations are up for their three-year recertification audit already. Frye says that even though the second time through the process has been simpler, it's still been beneficial.

"With these audits, things change. Our interpretation of things changes," he says. "Based on experience and collaboration with peers in ResponsibleAg, we may want to

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— Kevin Frye

do things differently than we did three years ago. That raises the bar for safety and ensures we're not only maintaining but exceeding our standards."

The recertification process also has allowed Frye and his safety team to look beyond mere regulatory compliance.

"The first time through, you're looking at the black and white, asking 'Does this meet the regulatory requirement as outlined?'" he explains. "The second time through, you're looking at it from a broader standpoint and asking, 'How effectively is it being implemented?' When you drill deeper into the questions, you find out that maybe there's a better way to actually implement it that goes well beyond regulatory compliance."

Frye says, for example, a location's Lockout/Tagout program may have checked off "all the boxes" for an audit, but now he's visiting with employees, asking how they put the program to use.

"That's where you find out what's really being done and where things can be improved beyond the audit," he adds. "It makes it more comprehensive."

Raising the safety bar

While certification may last for three years, Frye emphasizes that safety isn't a once-every-three-years proposition. He says ResponsibleAg has opened the door to collaboration with other safety professionals in the industry on the best way to do things, and it's allowed plant managers and supervisors to take a larger role in following their leading indicators to safety.

"When you have a ResponsibleAg-certified emblem hanging in your window, what better first impression can you make as far as your commitment to safety?" Frye says. "Our safety department motto is that we're here to protect our employees, our customers and our community, and I feel the ResponsibleAg audit process lends itself very well to achieving that objective."

To learn more about ResponsibleAg, visit www.ResponsibleAg.com 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**.

