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Improving Safety at American Plant Food Locations

Managers of small and large fertilizer blending locations find ResponsibleAg audit process simple and helpful.

Whether responsible for three employees or 20, plant managers at American Plant Food Corporation's (APF) fertilizer blending locations believe the ResponsibleAg audit helps them improve employee safety.

Michael Murphy manages the Troup, Texas, location and has been with APF since 2000. Murphy views his three employees as family. In fact, Murphy's family owned the plant before it was sold to APF in 2000. One current employee has been there since Murphy was a toddler.

"The guys at this location have been here 25 to 30 years. As a manager, I appreciate their dedication and long-time service. I want the facility to be safe for them," Murphy says. "Over time, it's easy to begin overlooking things. Things were much different in the late 80s, so this was a good way to be sure everyone is up to speed."

Justin Martin agrees. He oversees 20 employees at the APF location in Fort Worth, Texas.



JUSTIN MARTIN
Plant Manager,
American Plant Food,
Fort Worth, Texas

"We learned a lot. The guys are a lot more aware of safe practices throughout the facility since we've gone through the Responsible Ag audit," Martin explains. "We put up a lot more signs, are more aware of confined spaces and do a better job with lockout-tagout."

The ResponsibleAg Certification Program helps members ensure they are compliant with the gamut of environmental, health, safety and security regulations from OSHA, EPA, DOT and DHS.

By following a systematic approach, members will improve their efforts to properly store and handle farm input supplies, keeping employees, customers and their communities safe.

From audit to certification is low-stress process

"There are other programs and trainings out there, but I think ResponsibleAg is top of the line because it gives you a checklist, you work with an auditor, and after the audit, there are specific things to do if changes are needed," Murphy says. "The ResponsibleAg assessment checklist has 17 areas and you choose those that apply to your location. It's user friend-

ly and designed to help you be sure everyone goes home at night."

Member locations follow five simple steps to reach certification that their facility is operating safely and complying with all regulations. The first is to prepare for the audit by reviewing the ResponsibleAg assessment checklist and doing a pre-audit of the facility.

"What I like best about getting ready for the audit is the checklist. It told us what the auditor would be looking for, so we knew what to expect," Murphy says. "The auditor comes to help, not to scare or intimidate you."

After reviewing the assessment checklist and making initial corrections at the facility, an auditor is selected from an



MICHAEL MURPHY
Plant Manager,
American Plant Food,
Troup, Texas

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improvements needed. After making and documenting the adjustments, the location receives its ResponsibleAg certification which is good for three years.

Lots of learning, little cost

At Martin's Ft. Worth facility, eight areas of the operation were evaluated. The thorough process covered every aspect of the location from mechanical, electrical, housekeeping and cleanliness

to equipment such as ladders, fire escapes and electrical cords.

"The audit was very thorough and took about an hour per area. Most of the things we found were small details that didn't take much time or money to fix," Martin says. "Besides putting up more signage, the changes were things like having the right electrical covers and installing GFCI plugs in certain areas."

Murphy explained that the ResponsibleAg

audit also helped him better understand which products needed Safety Data Sheets and the importance of organizing them in a central location.

"My compliance center notebook is in place with tabs so I can have a safety data sheet in seconds, because if something happens, that's how quickly we need to have information on what to do," Murphy says. "Our first responders know where the notebook is too, so no one is flying blind."

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



APF is headquartered in Houston, Texas. Safety is paramount at the 11 dry-blending locations it operates throughout Texas.

online list of ResponsibleAg-credentialed auditors. ResponsibleAg helpdesk staff also help members walk through the process to choose an auditor for their location. Next comes the big day — the facility audit.

"The checklist helped the auditor and me communicate better because everything was very organized," Murphy says. "I had a list of questions and our auditor clarified what we needed to do during the audit and in the improvement plan we got after his visit." Once an audit is completed, the facility receives a Corrective Action Plan noting

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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**.



APF is a leader in producing ammonium sulfate-based blended fertilizers, marketing thousands of tons annually throughout North, Central and South America.