



Safety

5 Steps to Create a Functional and Effective Safety Program

Matt Morgan | Feb 16, 2023

Safety policies and procedures should be more than boxes to check on a compliance sheet. A properly set up and managed safety program factors in a manufacturing facility’s unique hazards and employee mix, provides clear direction for everyone at the worksite to follow to be safe on the job, and is reviewed and updated regularly.

“Many safety programs and safety policies stem from an Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirement to have these programs in place,” says Ben Starke, product manager for *Brady’s Safety Services* group, which provides expertise in *lockout/tagout*, electrical safety (specifically around *arc flash*) and *confined space*.

“From a company’s standpoint, not only do they want to meet that compliance, but they want it to be functional, too. It has to work within their manufacturing processes and expectations,” Starke adds. “When we write lockout/tagout policies for a company, we are creating the road map for their leadership to train on and their employees to follow. We want something that is going to be accepted by the people who are expected to follow it and something that will make sense and create a safer environment.”

“The common denominator with the people on our team is they have a deep understanding of not just the regulations but how equipment works, what motivates our customers, what their priorities are and how we can help them navigate that.”

Ben Starke
Brady

To improve their safety program to be functional and effective, manufacturers should consider these five tips from Brady.

Evaluate the current state of the company's safety program

Manufacturers with the resources to create and maintain a successful safety program on their own should start by getting a full understanding of where the program stands.

On the other hand, manufacturers that need help in this area shouldn't hesitate to contract with a reputable outside party. "Companies are calling us because they don't have the time, the resources or the personnel to get procedures or a written LOTO program in place or to have an arc flash risk assessment done," Starke says.

Read more: Arc Flash Safety Checkup

For manufacturers hiring a company to help with their safety program, the process looks like this:

The outside company can perform a gap analysis of the manufacturer's safety program. Experts will review the written program, talk to employees at all levels who are following the program—from maintenance workers to administrators—and make observations about how it's going.

"Coming out of that, we create essentially a state of the union," Starke says. "Here's what you're doing well with your program. Here are the areas to improve. Here are some action steps to improving in those areas."

The manufacturer can take it from there or continue to use the safety services company.

Besides reviewing the safety program overall, the next step will be to look at any procedures in place.

"A lot of our time is spent writing brand-new procedures, but if the manufacturer has procedures already—maybe they're really old, maybe they haven't been updated in a while—we can come in, perform an audit of the procedures, tell them which ones are still accurate and which ones have fallen out of date. The ones that have fallen out of date, we'll let them know what specifically they need to address."

WATCH: Got 100 seconds? Check out this overview of Brady Safety Services and take your trust in Brady to the next level:

Train employees and listen to their feedback

What good is a safety program if the employees don't know how to follow it? Training is a key component that should be seamlessly integrated.

"Training really should be a reflection of your written program," Starke explains. "When you select a trainer, you should be using somebody who wants to understand your program and tailor that training around your program. Don't get an out-of-the-box trainer who's just giving the same training to everybody."

As Starke alluded to earlier, it's essential that a safety program not only keep the manufacturer in compliance, but also be functional for how the company operates.

"Again, in those trainings you'll have the maintenance workers, the people you're expecting to follow the program," he says. "That's where they're going to tell you what's working and what's not working, and that gives you another opportunity to be more proactive in modifying your policy as opposed to reactive, where you're waiting for near misses—those potentially dangerous things—to drive change within a program or policy."

Insist on safety industry expertise

Manufacturers maintaining their own safety programs must make sure that their safety managers are experienced. With Brady, there is no need to worry.

Brady employs about 35 field engineers around the country who visit customer facilities full time. “We look for specific characteristics when hiring for our field engineering team,” Starke says. “They are former maintenance managers, former maintenance technicians, people with safety degrees and backgrounds. Engineers of all sorts: electrical, chemical, mechanical.

“The common denominator with the people on our team,” he continues, “is they have a deep understanding of not just the regulations but how equipment works, what motivates our customers, what their priorities are and how we can help them navigate that.”

Regularly evaluate the company’s safety program

Manufacturing companies should include regular checkups of their safety procedures.

“Over time, programs and policies fall out of date, so it is important to review those periodically, like on an annual basis,” Starke says. “In the case of lockout/tagout, OSHA has a **requirement to periodically inspect your procedures**. That is a great time to review your program. Is the policy still serving you the way that you need it to, or have you had changes to your organization, to your equipment, that would require you to modify your safety program?”

Read more: 7 Steps Safety Experts Recommend to Improve LOTO Procedures

Look for efficiencies in maintaining the program

If a manufacturer manages its safety program on its own, is it the most effective use of everyone’s time? This could be an area where an outside company can help greatly.

“When it comes to writing, say, lockout/tagout procedures, what we can do in two or three weeks some companies will spend all year trying to do on their own,” Starke says. “We bring that efficiency, that knowledge. There’s peace of mind that when Brady’s done, they’re in a really good place.”

The right software can help with efficiency, too. **Brady’s LINK360**, for example, makes it easy for manufacturers to maintain procedures for lockout/tagout and confined space programs.

“This is the tool my team uses to write procedures quickly, efficiently and in a standardized fashion, and it’s available to our clients,” Starke says. “When procedures become due for audit, the LINK360 software tells you. It allows you to make updates and edits quickly and efficiently. It helps you with documentation.”

After the safety policies are created, reviewed and implemented, it pays to have a **robust suite of products** to support the safety program in the future, and to know that a supplier is there when needed. For example, Brady features lines of **locks and lockout devices** and **label makers** that can be used with LINK360 to print lockout tags consistently and without smudgy handwriting.

“We are proud to be a full-solution provider,” Starke says. “Yes, we offer services but also integrated systems to help sustain those programs once we leave, and we’ve got tools for them to execute on a daily basis.”