



SUCCESS STORY

Randy Schwartzkopf, Reggie Maclin, and Rick Ramirez (pictured from left to right) are the OSHA 10-hour and 30-hour instructors at Afton Chemical's Sauget Plant.

Innovative Training Program Improves Facility Safety, Empowers Workers, and Saves Costs

International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC)

An innovative NIEHS-funded training program, facilitated by the *International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC)*, is helping strengthen worker health and safety at Afton Chemical Corporation's Sauget, Illinois facility. With support from the *NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP)*, ICWUC trains employees to recognize and respond to a variety of health and safety concerns in ways that protect workers and reduce costs.

Beginning in August 2012, management at Afton Chemical's Sauget worked with the ICWUC's Center for Worker Health and Safety Education in Cincinnati, Ohio to establish baseline health and safety knowledge across the plant. This was done by requiring all employees – from hourly workers to management – to complete an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-Hour Outreach Training course. ICWUC delivered the training courses, and used a Train-the-Trainer model, creating in-house capacity to continue the training over time.

"Most companies train only their management personnel in OSHA 10-Hour, who then promote safety among the employees they manage," said Randy Schwartzkopf, safety chair at the Sauget Plant for ICWUC Local 871C. "At the Afton Sauget plant, we believe safety is everyone's responsibility. By training all employees, our goal is to create more subject matter experts, promote transparency, and foster a culture of inclusion."

Employees enrolled in the training are a mix of hourly workers, salaried workers, and contractors. Hourly workers are represented by the ICWUC, Local 871C, a council of the United Food and Commercial Workers.

"Our training at [Afton Chemical] involves both the labor union and management, so the focus extends beyond a single safety issue as it comes up. When you get buy-in from management and you train everyone with basic information, then you can get a structural change, which carries on well after the training is complete."

– John Morawetz, Director, ICWUC
Center for Worker Health and
Safety Education

The NIEHS Worker Training Program

The NIEHS WTP grantees provide health and safety training for workers who are or can be exposed to hazardous materials and waste as part of their jobs or during emergency response. The program was authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660).

OSHA 10-Hour Outreach Training

Generally, an *OSHA Outreach Training Program for General Industry (OSHA 10-Hour)* provides basic safety and health information on the recognition, avoidance, reduction, and prevention of safety and health hazards in general industry worksites. The program also includes training on workers' rights, employer responsibilities, and how to file a complaint.

Training Adapted to Worksites

To maximize the training's use to Afton Chemical employees, ICWUC developed site-specific modules relevant to the plant. The training uses interactive methods, such as small group activities and hands-on demonstrations of personal protective equipment.

Additionally, training participants documented, compiled, and prioritized safety concerns observed in their workplace. Participants collaboratively assigned each concern to an employee, who then monitored progress to address the concern, and reported back during four quarterly follow-up sessions.

Advancing Safety and Saving Costs

With the support of management and ICWUC Local 871C, the system was used to resolve more than 100 safety concerns. The chemical plant was always compliant with safety rules, said Reggie Maclin,

a trainer at the Sauget plant. "But with the training provided by ICWUC, we wanted to move from compliance to excellence. We want to continuously improve to make sure everyone goes home safe."

The system to address safety concerns has continued beyond the initial trainings, advancing safety culture, improving communication between management and workers, and cutting costs. For example, the plant's engineering department estimated fixing overheating acetic acid drums would cost about \$25,000. But, the plant safety team and workers identified and implemented a safety solution for just \$3,117.



Sustained Impact

Five years after the initial training program, Afton Chemical continues to use the health and safety improvement process developed with ICWUC, and ensures every new hire completes the OSHA 10-Hour Outreach Training. To help maintain the model's sustainability over time, Afton Chemical continues to implement policies and practices to make safety a high-priority value. Further, Sauget trainers were reauthorized in 2016 to teach OSHA 10-Hour Outreach Training courses.

"With many safety trainings, there's limited infrastructure in place to sustain the program after the trainers leave," said Keith Mundy, ICWUC field training coordinator. "But this safety training is different because infrastructure is put in place comprised of both management and hourly trainers to sustain the program long after the outside trainers leave."

A Model Used Across Companies

Beyond the Sauget plant, ICWUC is working with other companies to make the training site-specific. In 2010, ICWUC began this model of company-wide OSHA 10-Hour Training at a Merck-owned Stonewall Pharmaceutical plant in Elkton, Virginia. After noting its success, ICWUC expanded use of this model to other companies in Ohio and West Virginia, with NIEHS grant funds enabling the wider model implementation.

"Through training, employees gain knowledge and an ability to recognize safety concerns, and respond to them. Within their first two weeks of employment, new employees receive the 10-Hour Outreach Training, which instills the idea that we're a safety conscience company. This has made our whole plant a safer place to work."

– Randy Schwartzkopf, Safety Chair at Afton Chemical's Sauget Plant for ICWUC Local 871C

References

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