



Occupational Safety and Health is a big deal for employers. Beyond the moral implications of providing a safe and healthful workplace, employers have a responsibility to comply with local and federal laws on the subject. In addition, safety performance is a key consideration while competing for work as many customers set the bar high for contractors who want to pre-qualify or maintain an approved status. Safety management has come a long way over the years, moving beyond compliance and reactive safety policies. Most employers understand that compliance is the baseline with higher levels of safety performance possible with the development of a Safety Management System (SMS). As with any other system, the SMS is dependent on the various elements of the program and how they complement each other to achieve safer outcomes.

An important consideration for your SMS is – Who will be managing it? For some, the role of the safety professional is an additional responsibility given to someone on the staff who has capacity for it, a strong desire to be involved with safety, or simply a “tag, your it” decision. In organizations that have a dedicated safety department and safety professional(s), the responsibility is more clearly defined. In both cases, the need for a technical safety expert is instrumental in achieving successful outcomes, both from a moral and a business perspective. Finding technically strong safety professionals that understand the work and the safety & health requirements for completing that work are in high demand. Many times, the right candidate will come from outside the electrical industry. These folks have the safety management expertise that you need but lack the technical expertise to effectively apply them in an inside or outside electrical construction setting. Other candidates may be very experienced in the electrical trade but lack some technical safety management expertise.

It is understood that to become an effective safety professional, years of training and exposure to the work is required. As the old adage goes – “There is no replacement for experience”. This is fundamentally true, but we can help individuals compensate for areas that need further development with targeted programs that address gaps and weaknesses while leveraging strengths. The candidate with a strong safety background may need additional exposure to electrical safe work practices, PPE requirements, unique procedures, and engaging with line crews. The candidate who lacks safety experience will likely need introductions to incident investigations, safety program development, conducting safety meetings, and regulatory compliance. Admittedly, this process will take time and cannot be done overnight. A seasoned safety professional has had years of exposure to safety management, professional development, and qualifications. However, we can help “new to role” safety professionals by preparing them with basic, fundamental safety management concepts from an electrical contracting perspective.

The NECA Safety Professionals Institute (NSPI) was developed by NECA to help prepare the next generation of electrical safety professionals. NSPI includes a series of pre-work modules that are focused on either inside or outside electrical work and prepare the participant for a comprehensive in-person (3) day workshop where they will drill down into fundamental safety management concepts, followed by a requirement to complete a capstone project relevant to their employer’s business. The program addresses the reality that the demand for safety professionals is at an all time high and developing folks to assume this important role will be just as challenging and rewarding as developing the next line worker or field leader.

For more information, reach out to NECA Safety or NECA Education.

Thanks,

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