



Workplace Safety

5 Safety-Forward Reasons to Adopt EHS Software

Vanessa Jo Roberts | Dec 19, 2019

Is it time for your business to consider adopting an EHS software solution? We look into the benefits that a more automated approach to safety management can bring to a manufacturing shop floor.

Increasingly, manufacturing and metalworking businesses are turning to environmental health and safety software to help them automate management of their safety programs and reporting.

Here's why: EHS management tools can add value by reducing the reporting burden and also creating a consolidated record for meeting compliance requirements. The expanded use of these tools can also enhance safety culture, reducing incidents and improving productivity.

"At a high level, a centralized and automated EHS solution for managing hazards, incidents, inspections and sustainability information pulls together the data necessary to monitor trends and gain a true picture of risk across the organization," points out an *article on Manufacturing.net*.

Here are five benefits to consider when deciding if adopting EHS management solutions is right for your business.

No. 1: EHS software creates consolidated information sources for safety reports and inspections.

Often companies and safety teams will view EHS software as not for them by virtue of business or team size. Yet, such programs offer even a small or midsize business a way to gather more insights into what's driving injuries on the plant floor—both from incidents and near misses.

"Workers narrowly avoid often. These near misses may not seem important in the grand scheme of the operation, but they can offer insight into onsite conditions and give operational leaders clues as to how to improve safety," explains this piece, "*Strategies for Effective EHS Incident Tracking*."

No. 2: EHS software establishes comprehensive and repeatable processes for meeting OSHA compliance requirements.

Even in a paper or semi-manual reporting environment, a business will typically use standardized

forms and have set expectations for how inspections are detailed.

But an EHS software program can further enhance that capability using drop-down menus for some responses and even prompting users to provide specific types of information that they might otherwise not include in a free-form response on paper. Many EHS programs also can help ensure the use of common terms so that safety teams looking to identify the source of repeatable incidents can quickly search hundreds of reports for helpful information.

And these tools also can help during an on-site visit by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—letting your safety team pull reports on the fly for OSHA inspectors.

Finally, there's also the chance for better compliance going forward, adds the Manufacturing.net article: "Critical issues to safety and production once identified in one location can be shared instantly across the organization, ensuring new learnings and/or corrective actions are not kept in a silo."



Want to figure out your injury-related costs? Use our *interactive workplace injury calculator*.

No. 3: EHS software lets your safety reporting go mobile.

Today, most EHS tools allow reporting on smartphones and tablets. That means safety teams no longer need to take copious notes and then return to their desks where they have to recast the gathered information into reports. Instead, they can add information on their mobile devices right from the shop floor.

"Mobile technology using safety compliance software, such as smartphones and tablets, quickly can be populated with existing inspection content, enhanced with expanded recording capabilities and put on to the work floor to rapidly capture conditions, auto-document photos attached to observations, assign corrective actions appropriately via e-mail and generate the final report by simply pressing the print button," explains Master Lock safety expert Todd Grover in an *EHS Today article*.

No. 4: EHS management solutions can expand engagement in safety activities by workers.

EHS management tools also can enhance safety culture because access on mobile devices can let any worker look up at a machine's inspection information in real time and also check up on safety standards and requirements as needed.

"With a system that allows all employees to engage with the health and safety program and clearly understand the precautions in place, the company can collect more accurate data collection and promote a safe work culture," notes an *EHS Today article*.

No. 5: EHS software reduces your carbon footprint.

Managing inspections and safety reporting requires a lot of documents. And the paper will pile up if your process is manual. Consider this example for a plant with 100 pieces of equipment and 10 authorized employees that was included in a recent *Better MRO article* about compliance with OSHA lockout/tagout rules: "That would equate to at least 1,000 lockout/tagout requirements a year and more than 3,000 pages of paper documentation."

And that's just for complying with a single regulation. You do the math; the paper usage can multiply quickly. The reduction in paper and the reporting burden (not to mention the time spent searching for

reports) clearly can drive up sustainability and time-savings.

But Remember, There's No Silver Bullet

And here's a final caveat: Like all things in the shop, EHS is not one-size-fits-all. You'll need to adapt and develop your system and its use to meet your business's specific needs based on risk factors.

"It is important that each organization develop a management system to meet the needs of the organization," points out a *book by The National Academies* focused on addressing chemical hazards, which then cautions, "If the burden of organizational oversight and management of the EHS program is not appropriately tied to the organizational risk, then the safety program may lose credibility in the eyes of the people it supports."

Have you adopted EHS software? What are the critical lessons learned from rollout you would share with other companies?

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