When One Event is One Too Many!

Can one event decide your future? Can one event erode years of credibility and good will for your employees, customers and community?

The simple answer is yes. The complex answer is; it depends on how strong your processes are in identifying and controlling major events before they occur or when they occur how good do you respond to them.

Have you implemented and tested at your facility a “business continuity plan” and “crisis management preparedness processes”? You can wait for an event to occur – and you might be around to explain why it happened – or you can proactively develop a risk based acceptance process that will help you respond, identify, document, analyze, control and eliminate the event before they occurs.

Any EHS event can become a potential liability issue for your customers, employees and community. EHS needs to be a fundamental responsibility, not just to protect your employees and your assets, but also to add value to your community and customers by protecting their reputations as well as your own.

Have you thought of everything? Remember it is Environmental, Health and Safety; Natural disasters, like the tsunami that hit Japan, to the Hurricane that hit east coast of the US, to the cyber-attack in the Middle-East, to the pandemic outbreak of the avian influenza worldwide, to the explosion in West Texas. Are you prepared for these events and global crises, or are you accepting the fact this will not happen to you?

Developing a proactive risk based acceptance process that will ensure you deliver on your EHS expectations should be centered on the following:

- Pre-qualification programs,
- Job risk assessments
- On-going audits and Inspections
- Business Continuity Plan
- Crisis Management Preparedness

In order for these processes to be successful, you must include your; employees, contractors, subcontractor, vendors, customers … any person potentially entering your facility or site. They must be part of the development process and must work together toward meeting your goals and expectations. This is not a onetime step, where you complete and you hang it on the wall, this is a live process, and should be updated frequently to include new risk identified. This is not your program only, it is everyone’s program!
One immediate action that will make your facility be better than the norm, have one action item tracking system for your site or facility or company. Have your customers, vendors, contractors, everyone that enter your facility, document their “action items” regarding any risk they identify (nothing too small) in the same system that you own and manage, and have visibility and capability to share the corrective actions identified and implement across all organization.

Even deciding not to take an action is an action by itself. Document the no-action as well; it is a source of risk acceptance. With the appropriate training and implementation of a single safety risk assessment tool, your cost of compliance will be dramatically reduced while maintaining a high level quality program. Have one process and procedure for EHS and mainly for training requirements, and work on streamlining redundant or contradicting Goals.

Your plan should cover:

- Critical business and IT systems
- Global traveling and Global communication plans and networks
- Succession and delegation of authority
- In-depth evaluation of mission critical suppliers
- Work-from-home capability and remote access to key systems and data
- Pandemic preparedness and significant and extended absences or illness

**Conclusion:** Don’t let one event be one too many for your organization. The difference is in working together with your employees, customers, vendors, contractors to add value by making EHS compliance integral to everything you do.

**About The Author:**  *Fadi E. Rahal* currently serves as the President of Effective Problem Solving LLC. Rahal has worked in the Energy industry for more than 18 years and additionally has extensive experience leading investigations within all types of businesses around the globe. Rahal has also institutionalized and implemented Six-Sigma program in concert with Continuous Improvement - Root Cause Analysis (RCA) programs and Change Acceleration Process (CAP) in various organizations, including GE Energy and Black & Veatch.

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