

**SOUTHERN COTTON GINNERS ASSOCIATION
SAFETY PROGRAM**

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Abstract

The Southern Cotton Ginnners Association's safety program, initiated in 1990, has helped member gins comply with safety regulations and reduce accidents. The program encourages and helps gins to develop their own formal written safety program, guard machinery in their gin, and conduct gin safety educational programs for employees. Local gin safety schools and seminars are conducted which have attracted 1100 gin employees in the last three years. Our accident surveys reveal that between 1992 and 1995, 31 percent of the accidents happened in the press area, 15 percent occurred in lint cleaners, 10 percent were associated with gin stands, and 10 percent occurred on tractors or trailers on the gin yard.

Introduction

Southern Cotton Ginnners Associations's safety program was initiated in 1990 in response to the needs of members in Louisiana. The Worker's Compensation section of the Louisiana Department of Labor required companies who filed claims to have a formal written safety program. Our program was originally developed to meet their guidelines. It is presented for their acceptance yearly in order to maintain compliance with their program. We took the basics of the Louisiana requirements and expanded the safety program to meet the specific needs of cotton gins among our members in the five state area. The program is updated and improved each year as we respond to the needs of our members and requirements of the government and insurance companies.

A formal written safety program is a gin's road map to a safer operation. It is also a permanent documentation record. It is very important to document everything you do in regard to safety. There are more than 100 places to document in our safety book. The book each year becomes a permanent record of the specifics of a gin's safety program for that year. Keeping them prominently on a shelf in your office is visible proof of an effective working safety program on a daily basis.

In order for a safety program to be as effective as it can be, ownership must first be committed to providing a safe work place. A safe work place is one that is as free as possible from the possibility of serious injury or death. This is the gin owner's responsibility under OSHA's general duty

clause. It is also the manager's responsibility to operate a safe work place.

An effective safety program provides a safe and well guarded work place, an effective program of employee selection, job orientation and training, and a written policy that gives excellent documentation of the training program. It also provides periodic inspections and training sessions to monitor and keep employees in a safety mode. When this has been properly provided, it is the employees' responsibility to perform their duties properly and safely.

Activities

As Safety Director for Southern Cotton Ginnners Association, I am involved in a number of activities for members. One is to conduct safety training for participants at the gin school held in late June each year at the gin lab in Stoneville. I update our safety program which is sent out in August each year. I conduct gin safety seminars during the month of August each year. For three years we have provided these 2-1/2 hour sessions of back-to-basic safety training to 1100 owners, managers, ginnners, and gin employees. The program is based on the experiences of previous years and the needs for certain types of training. Strong emphasis is placed on proper guarding, PPE, lockout-tagout, bloodborne pathogens, electrical safety, and individual responsibility.

Each year different subjects are emphasized along with the basics.

I conduct inspection visits for our gins on a yearly basis and can make extra visits as requested.

The inspections have theses purposes:

- 1 Give recommendations for improving the gin's written safety program.
2. Identify hazards that could cause serious injury and recommend correction procedures.
3. Make recommendations which will bring gin into compliance with OSHA standards.

In response to new DOT requirements for commercial drivers license (CDL) drivers who work for companies with less than 50 CDL drivers, I presented two series of drug and alcohol reasonable suspicion training seminars--one series was in March and one was in July. We arranged a drug and alcohol drug testing consortium for members of SCGA. Eighty-seven gins participated in this. Several drivers were caught positive and were eliminated from the module truck driver crew and/or rehabilitated. The program is serving its purpose in taking users off the road and helping our gins comply with new regulations.

Program Description

Features of our safety program include:

1. Management safety policy statement
2. Employee application and information
3. Rules for employee conduct
 - Employee training
 - Drug and alcohol policy
 - Bloodborne pathogens rule
 - Lockout/tagout
 - Respiratory protection
 - Hearing conservation
 - Equipment grounding conductor
 - Emergency plan
 - Hazard communication
 - Confined spaces policy
 - Duties of various jobs
 - Module builder and tarp safety
4. Record and procedures
5. Accident investigation
6. First aid and CPR training
7. Gin inspections
8. Gin safety meetings
9. Guide for OSHA inspection
10. Educational and PPE materials

Also a part of our program is the OSHA compliance book for cotton gins which was developed and supplied by NCGA in 1995. This provides the instruction for complying with the standards we are under, as well as some general industry standards that gins should comply with in providing a safe work place.

Why is a safety program needed? A strong safety program is needed because of the injuries which have occurred over the years.

I would like to show you the types of injuries which have occurred in our association territory from 1992-1995.

Injury Surveys

We take an injury survey each year. The type of injuries and causes are noted. Gins which have had no lost-time injuries are given a safety plaque. When these are placed in easy view of employees and visitors, it sends the message that yours is a safe gin.

Three hundred lost-time injuries were reported in the years from 1992 to 1995. Here are the results of these surveys (Table 1).

When we look at body parts-injured data, we find that 35 percent (or 104 injuries) were on fingers, hands, arms, and wrists. Twenty-five percent were in the back, shoulder, muscle-strain, neck and rib area. Twenty percent were on

the leg appendage, 15 percent were on the head, and 5 percent were others.

We will now look at the machines in which injuries occurred (Table 2). Thirty-one percent (or 52 injuries) occurred in the press area. Fifteen percent (or 26 injuries) occurred in lint cleaners. Ten percent (or 17 injuries) occurred in gin stands. More injuries occurred in the press area than in the lint cleaners and gin stands combined. Ten percent (or 17 injuries) occurred in tractor or trailer incidents.

The deaths which occurred in our association area are most alarming and should ring a bell to motivate gingers to achieve a higher level of safety in their operation (Table 3).

Notice in this information that four of these deaths were in or around the press. Four of the deaths were falls. Three of the deaths were falls in the press area.

This information should lead owners and managers to boost their training of press workers and put more emphasis on fall prevention.

We know that more than 80 percent of the accidents are caused by unsafe acts. If you have unsafe machinery, the possibility of serious injury or death increases greatly.

Safety Priority and Commitment

If you have not already placed a high priority on your safety program, I recommend you put it at the top. A safe gin is an efficient, productive, and profitable operation.

In a safety operation, ownership is committed to safety. Owner must empower management to make and keep the gin safe. Management must be committed to safety and carry it to employees, time and time and time again. It must be emphasized constantly.

It is helpful when employees know that management and owner are very safety oriented. I have been in gin safety meetings where the owner or top management stressed safety to the group. It gets employees' attention and cooperation.

How do you get the message across to workers that safety is a top priority?

1. By telling them it is important every day. Owner or top management should walk through the gin periodically, reminding each employee to be careful, wear protective equipment, etc. Tell them when they are doing a good job and point out if they are not.
2. Give them examples of injuries and deaths that have happened.
3. Provide them safety training in their area.

4. Use videos, safety brochures, and safety rules to get back to basics. I often hear managers say, "Well, we've had the same bunch for several years. They have seen tapes before." What do you think Jimmy Johnson, new coach of the Dolphins, would say if an assistant coach and players said on Monday morning, "Hey coach, we've heard all that before. Let's just rest this week, work on new plays, and play ball Sunday." I guarantee the assistant coach would be looking for a new job, and players would get serious about their jobs. Safety must be an automatic state of mind, an ingrained habit of doing the job properly and safely every time.
5. Use weekly tailgate sessions of 5-15 minutes to keep workers safety oriented. This is a good time to point out any careless actions that were noticed during the week, remind them to use safety glasses, ear protection, dust masks, (climbing gear if needed).
6. Reward them with a bonus for a safe season.

If you have been lucky with some unsafe conditions in your plant, it won't last. Do all you can to provide a safe work place through proper guarding, good housekeeping, and a well documented safety training program. Owners and managers--take it seriously. It will benefit you and your employees for years to come.

Gin Injuries 1992-95
Southern Cotton Ginners Association
300 Surveys

Table 1

Body Part Injured	No. of Injuries	Percent
Finger, hand, arm, wrist	104	35
Back, shoulder, muscle strain, neck, rib	76	25
Ankle, foot, knee, toe, hip, leg	60	20
Eye, head, nose, ear, teeth	44	15
Other	16	5

Table 2

Major Cause of Injuries 1992-95	No. of Injuries	Percent
Press	52	31
Lint Cleaner	26	16
Gin Stand	17	10
Tractor and Trailer	17	10
Falls	11	7
Forklift	10	7
Ladder	8	5
Bale Conveyor	8	5
Lifting	8	5
Suction Pipe	8	5

Table 3

Deaths - Six	
1992 -	Employee fell into chain drive in press pit.
1992 -	Employee caught in module truck loading chain.
1993 -	Employee was in lint slide, and tramper was turned on (miscommunication).
1993 -	Employee fell off trailer tongue into tractor wheel.
1994 -	Employee fell down into press pit during pit fire.