

GIN SAFETY PROGRAMS
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Introduction

I am fully aware of what time it is and I know that we would all like to get some lunch before the crowds hit so I will make my remarks very brief. I am Dusty Findley with Southeastern Cotton Ginners' Assn. As many of you know my former job was as Manager of Safety Services for Texas Cotton Ginners' Assn. I am here to give you my perspective on the status of injuries in the Southeast. I have only worked in the region since October so I don't have a lot of numbers to share with you today. All I have to go on is information I have gathered as I have traveled to gins in the area, discussions with insurance people in the southeast and my experience with Texas gins.

Southeastern Gin Accidents

While I can't say I've been to all the gins in the region, I have been to most of the member gins at least once. My initial impression is that the gins are larger, faster and a higher volume than those that I am used to calling on. They are also newer and more automated than what I am used to. If you were to ask me about a group of gins that fit that (bigger, faster, newer, more automated) category I would say that they will likely have a lower frequency of accidents and that the severity would likely be high for those accidents that did occur. That is exactly what I found. Very few gins told me that had any accidents major or minor. The major exceptions were the two fatalities that occurred in our area. One inside the gin involving a man getting pinned between a bale and the scale in the bale handling system and the other was outside the gin in which a ginner was pinned while hooking up a trailer.

In discussing what I had found with some of the insurance people in the southeast, I was told that they are beginning to see the frequency of minor injuries beginning to rise. They also said that the two fatal injuries were a not at all typical of what they expect to see over a long period. I was told that workers compensation was beginning to tighten a little as well because of that increase in frequency. What they are seeing is an increase in cuts that require stitches, back injuries and eye injuries. Their experience is that the gins with formal safety programs are the ones that have the lowest injuries and are the best risk. Now there's some earth shattering news. Consequently, management's commitment as well as good safety programs were being looked at when a gin's workers compensation insurance was being quoted more so than in the past.

This is a picture of Rosier's Iceberg. It is a representation of how the data you have seen and data like it can indicate a larger problem. We have seen a lot of data presented at in this session, so what are we trying to do with all of it? The goal is to reduce the size of the iceberg as a whole so that it doesn't pose a serious threat to our business. Well there are two ways to reduce the size of an iceberg. First we can attack what is above the surface i.e. working only on those areas indicated by the data. If we take this approach, once the top of the iceberg is knocked off, more will float to the surface. If we are to truly reduce the part that is above the waterline, we must shrink the iceberg as a whole. The only way to do that is to treat safety as an integral part of the ginning operation. Not just something that is done now and then because some insurance man tells him he has to or because a field rep from a gin association says we should.

Safety Program

OSHA has set out guidelines as to what it will look for in an safety program and in analyzing a company's overall safety attitude.

Management Leadership and Employee Participation

Many people as well as OSHA inspectors feel like these elements are the most important because without backing from management any written program isn't worth much more than the paper it is printed on. This means that the management knows the written safety program better than anyone else in the plant does. They have to, otherwise who is going to train the employees or make sure the supervisors are doing it correctly.

Workplace Analysis and Hazard Elimination

This is important in that you as employers have a legal and ethical requirement to provide a safe workplace. OSHA General Duty Clause: "Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees." This means that you must identify the hazards in your gin and eliminate them before allowing people to work there. This shouldn't happen just once a year but as a continuing effort to keep the workplace injury and hazard free. This includes doing periodic safety inspections on your own.

Accident and Record Analysis

This means going over the injuries and close calls that you have had. This should include but not be limited to those on the OSHA 200 form and comparing them to those in past years. You should also compare them to injuries from others in the industry. The data this panel presents can be part of that analysis.

Safety and Health Training as a Whole

All employees should be trained as to how to do their job properly. An integral part of that training should be safety

training. Employees can't do their job properly if they aren't trained to do it safely. There are also specific areas that employees should be trained in such as Lockout/Tagout and Hazard Communication.

Emergency Response

If a serious accident were to happen, are you prepared? Who would you call? Who would help the injured person? Are they trained in First Aid and prepared to take Universal Precautions regarding bloodborne Pathogens?

Your Safety program should have all of these elements reduce the size of the injury iceberg.

Conclusions

Although the accident trends in the southeast are different

than those in other regions of the country, the methods for reducing injuries are the same. We all need to continue working on making the size of that iceberg smaller so that our gins don't go the way of the Titanic.

