



Safety Defenders Defend Safety Training

Esterline Makes Workplace Safety Priority One

Making defense industry products takes a certain amount of secrecy. But Esterline Defense Technologies makes no secret of how much emphasis they place on the safety culture of their 64,000-square-foot Harnett County plant. The smart companies, they say, think about safety first.

“I believe in constant awareness,” declares Esterline quality/EH&S manager Stacy Farrow. “If there are ever any safety concerns, I try to get right on it. I think if you don’t have constant safety training, people get complacent.”

Complacency is a mindset that Esterline can’t afford. As the sole source provider of radio frequency (RF) countermeasures, or chaff, to the U.S. government, the company must maintain the highest levels of safety possible. And making chaff can be a dangerous business.

Making Chaff

Missiles come in two varieties: heat seeking and radar guided. The Lillington plant concentrates on the latter. They are the largest fabricating facility in the world to do so.

To defend against radar-guided missiles, aircraft must often eject countermeasures that confuse the radar-seeking ability of the projectile to distract it from its target. The chaff that pilots disperse behind their planes is manufactured from glass fibers coated in aluminum.

Manufacturing chaff involves extreme heat, chemicals and ergonomic challenges. Ignoring safety can not only affect personal well-being but also the bottom line.

Esterline Defense Technologies Challenge

Esterline is the sole source provider of radio frequency (RF) countermeasures, or chaff, to the U.S. government. Manufacturing chaff— glass fibers coated in aluminum— involves extreme heat, chemicals and ergonomic challenges.

IES Solution

Ongoing EHS training including DOT, HAZWOPER, HAZCOM and Lock Out/ Tag Out procedures.

Benefits

Based upon a variety of factors like the cost of accident avoidance and the lack of fines and fees associated with safety regulation noncompliance, Esterline attributed nearly \$100,000 in cost savings to the project.

“The safety and well-being of our workers is paramount, but we also have to consider that accidents cost money,” says vice president of chaff operations, James Finnegan. “When people have accidents, prices go up. When prices rise, people won’t buy from America.”

As a result, all 54 workers in the plant regularly undergo safety training, and personal safety meetings are held monthly.

“An educated group of people will stop before they do something that’s not right and will correct themselves,” says Finnegan.

Working with NC State

NC State Industry Expansion Solutions (IES) Regional Manager, Kami Baggett worked with Esterline to arrange their continuing training and has seen the results firsthand.

“Esterline is diligent in making sure their safety program is in place,” says Baggett. “They do a good job of staying on top of it, even when production is low. Many companies don’t do that.”

IES Improvement Specialists Wendy Laing and Mac McNulty provided Esterline with a range of on-site safety instruction courses, including nearly 20 hours of their required DOT

““ Our employees are our greatest asset and we want them to remain safe wherever they are. ””

—Stacy Farrow, Quality Manager,
Esterline Defense Technologies

and HAZWOPER training, as well as hazard communications and Lock Out/Tag Out procedure training.

“IES has shown that they don’t just show up with a canned program,” says Finnegan. “Mac and Wendy make the training fun as well as relevant to us, and that makes a big difference. It helps ingrain what everything’s about.”

Based upon a variety of factors like the cost of accident avoidance, and the lack of fines and fees associated with safety regulation noncompliance, Esterline’s savings totaled nearly \$100,000, directly attributable to the project.

“There’s no thought process to ever stop these courses or refreshers,” says Finnegan. “We have a healthy, happy atmosphere in this facility. From the top to the bottom, I listen to them, and they listen to me. And we’re all happy with the results.”

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