

The Casmin, Inc. safety story is a dynamic one with both good times and bad fueling their determination for improvement over the last four years. An outsider might zero in on a serious OSHA reportable incident that occurred in their plant in 2003 and others would pinpoint their sheer size as the reason their safety program was in need of an overhaul. But once you get to know the group at Casmin, it becomes clear that their positive safety culture has grown slowly and steadily and can only be attributed to one thing: the company's desire to protect the health and well-being of all its employees. If anyone ever tried to tell you it can't be done, Casmin is here to tell you it can.

Here is Casmin's story from the start, deep in the heart of central Florida.



EMR:

An Experience Modification Rate (EMR) is a factor that is calculated for each employer's Workers' Compensation insurance.

The EMR is a value that compares the claim profile of the employer to the claim profile that would be expected of an employer of similar size in the same industry. A value of 1.00 is average, which means that the actual losses roughly equaled the expected losses. An EMR factor greater than 1.00 means the employer experiences more losses than expected and an EMR of less than 1.00 indicates the employer experience fewer losses than expected. "Credit EMRs" (less than 1.00) reduce the insurance premium, while "debit EMRs" (greater than 1.00) result in a premium surcharge.

[Source: Understanding Your Workers' Compensation Experience Modification (PDF), Risk Administrations Services, Inc.]

Once upon a time, in a land known better for tourist attractions, alligators and talking mice, there was a component manufacturing company called Casmin. Unfortunately, Casmin was not the fairest in the land; their poor safety performance had driven their experience modification rate (EMR) for their workers' compensation insurance up to 1.47 (a value of 1.00 is average). Credit EMRs (less than 1.00) reduce premium, while debit EMRs (greater than 1.00) result in a premium surcharge. Virtually uninsurable, it was clear something, or some things, needed to change.

(Don't get discouraged, no good fairytale goes without a happy ending.)

However, in component manufacturing there is no fairy godmother, magic wand or flying carpet to whisk away the hazards and unveil a sparkling, incident-free workplace overnight. A good safety culture takes time and care to cultivate and maintain—so that's what Casmin did. Through a variety of unique solutions, Casmin unlocked their positive safety potential.

The Casmin turnaround began in 2002 when Casmin approached Lake Centre for Rehabilitation (LCR) for assistance to reduce the number of injuries at their Lady Lake location. (Casmin has two additional manufacturing facilities.) The primary concern was the number of new hires experiencing injuries within weeks of starting work. At the time, a team of LCR clinicians toured the plant and conducted an "ergonomic assessment." This entailed observation and measurement of movement patterns and loads handled in key areas of Casmin's operations including yard, assembly, saw and maintenance zones.

Next, the clinicians tested a significant number of employees from each of these areas to determine their strength in various tasks such as lifting, push/pull activities and gripping. The data gathered from the ergonomic assessment and strength testing allowed LCR to develop new job descriptions that accounted for the physical demands of each job. These job descriptions were further expanded into post-offer functional screens, which meant that once a potential employee was offered a position at Casmin, he or she was asked to visit LCR for a post-offer screening.

Not surprisingly, the impact of implementing these new post-offer screens made a tremendous impact on Casmin's injury log (see Figure 1 on page 44). In a short amount of time, this unique approach provided long-term solutions in Casmin's facilities.

Taking Command

In 2003, Casmin's Shipping and Receiving Manager, Dan Kleczka, was moved into a newly created Safety Coordinator position. Dan had been instrumental in developing the safety program already being used at Casmin, so his move to Safety Coordinator made perfect sense and allowed him to focus all of his time and energy on expanding their safety procedures and policies.

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More than Magic

by Molly E. Butz

at a glance

- ❑ WTCA member Casmin, Inc. overhauled its safety program in the nick of time.
- ❑ Casmin conducted a series of ergonomic assessments to help revise job descriptions and reduce task-related injuries.
- ❑ Small changes made a big difference: a switch to composite strapping material, custom-cut anti-fatigue mats and employee-selected personal protective equipment.

Safety Takes the Stage at Casmin





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More than Magic

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"Not more than four weeks after I transferred to the new safety position a major safety incident occurred at Casmin," Dan recalled. "However, we had a safety program in place and I made sure that I provided OSHA with all of the documentation I could get my hands on." With several years of part-time safety experience and an OSHA hearing as a result of the incident behind him, Dan and the Casmin management team pushed full-steam ahead with additions, revisions and a general overhaul of the Casmin Safety Program.

The safety achievements at Casmin started appearing in small doses and their EMR began to drop with each accomplishment. Simple changes that might go unnoticed by the untrained eye made enormous differences to Casmin's employees, beginning with their lumber carts. One of the ergonomic tests conducted determined that lumber carts with rubber wheels required 90 lbs. of energy to move whereas carts with steel wheels required just 30 lbs. of energy. Today, all of Casmin's lumber carts have steel wheels and fewer back injuries as a result (see page 48).

It's a given that Casmin employees look out for each other; their safety culture runs that deep.

Casmin changed the type of banding they were using to bundle trusses together; their new composite strapping material makes it virtually impossible to get hurt. They also require affected employees to wear safety shoes, gloves, goggles/side shields and, after thorough audiometric testing, hearing protection. Dan explained that employees get to choose the personal protective equipment that is right for them. "If we expect them to wear it and take care of it, then it needs to be comfortable," Dan said. "Within reason, we try to accommodate our employees with a comfortable fit in every way we can."

A plant tour at Casmin reveals even more safety features from top-of-the-line, anti-fatigue mats that were custom-cut for individual equipment areas to encouraging messages on safety banners that serve as a constant reminder to all of its employees: Casmin takes safety seriously. White walkways, yellow equipment areas and red safety zones make it clear where people, carts and tools do and don't belong (see page 48). (Don't get caught lingering in a red zone, because you can be sure someone will point it out to you.) It's a given that Casmin employees look out for each other; their safety culture runs that deep.

You'll also notice, if you're paying close attention, that the newest additions to their forklift fleet look a little odd. That's because they were designed using the latest ergonomically correct controls, positioned to the right of the seat and exactly at the driver's fingertips. And, if you happen to see any one of their certified forklift drivers in action, you'll notice he's snugly cinched into his seat by his seat belt.

Taking Part

Almost any safety program assigns varying degrees of disciplinary action for failing to adhere to its policies and procedures. In this respect, Casmin is no different. From issuing a safety violation to immediate termination, Casmin takes action for

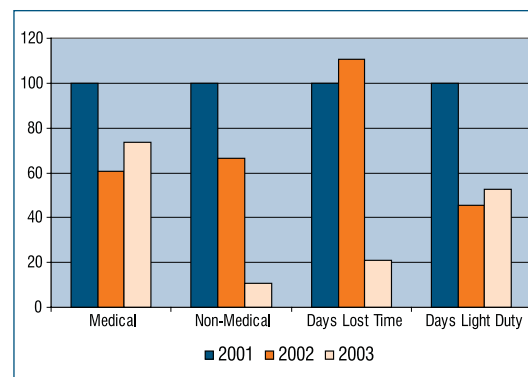


Figure 1.



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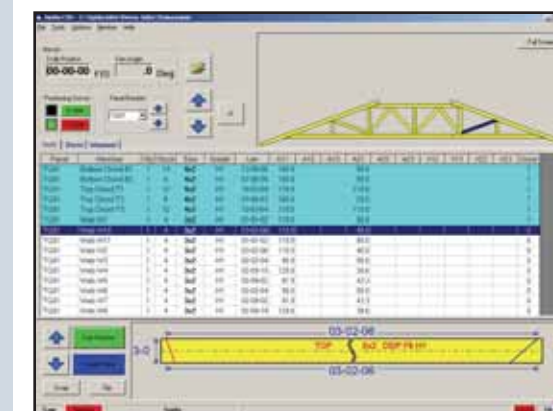


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More than Magic

Continued from page 44

each incident. However, a truly innovative safety program strives to correct unsafe behavior before it begins, and this is where Casmin sets itself apart.

The safety committee at Casmin is a force to be reckoned with and their mission statement says it all: "We will assure our employees a safe work environment by complying with all safety rules and regulations through reinforcing positive behavior, work area/procedure improvement and enforcement." Comprised of one employee from each department or area per shift, Casmin's safety committee meets a minimum of once each month to review the incidents for that period and conduct any new business. Even though each final safety decision is made by the safety department, this is a safety committee with teeth.

And, if you hang around Casmin long enough, you just might get to see one of the most interesting things of all—a Behavioral Safety Observation (BSO). "Each member of Casmin's safety committee is asked to participate in the Behavioral Safety Program." Dan explained. "All they have to do is walk up to an employee, explain that they are going to perform a Behavioral Safety Observation and then watch what the employee is doing for two or three minutes."

Intended for educational purposes only, the observed employee cannot be issued a safety violation or reprimanded in any way, even if they are doing something wrong. After filling out a user-friendly form for each BSO, any safety concerns are discussed with the employee. The items for observation include everything from the use of personal protective equipment to general employee attitude and the simple choices of N/A, Safe or Unsafe make it easy to spot the problem areas. The forms are returned to the safety department at the end of the month and the statistics are tallied for review. In the end, Casmin's BSOs are easy and non-



A truly innovative safety program strives to correct unsafe behavior before it begins.



intrusive to perform and they provide an excellent proactive way to encourage safe behavior and change unacceptable actions.

Taking It to the Next Level

This is not where the story ends. In 2004, Casmin conducted another ergonomic assessment, this time reviewing the office workstations at the Lady Lake and Tavares production plants and also the corporate office in Leesburg. To reduce stress and strain, a number of recommendations for workstation modifications resulted from this process. Even minor workstation tweaks made an extraordinary difference to the office employees. "I think my new footrest is my favorite part," Amy Stubrud revealed. "But really, a lot of things on my desk changed just a little bit. It's amazing, but it made a big difference. I used to have a lot of back trouble, and now....it's just gone!"

Taking It Outside

Casmin has also taken steps to ensure the safety of those working outside of their component manufacturing plant. Their delivery trucks are equipped with top-notch precautions, not only for the safety of the driver, but for everyone around them. In addition to prominent "HOW'S MY DRIVING?" signs, each Casmin truck is equipped with a set of four sequential lights that flash alternately the same way an emergency vehicles lights flash. Each truck is also fitted with an oscillating amber light that attaches magnetically to the rear of the vehicle as an extra warning on over-sized loads.

You'll also notice, if you happen to get a delivery of Casmin's components, that they readily use WTCA warning tags at key positions on their products to alert the installation crew to various safety information. And, as previously

Continued on page 50



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Interested in how you can improve the safety culture at your company but don't know where to start? Start with WTCA's Operation Safety Program, designed specifically to help component manufacturers achieve a culture of safety and meet crucial safety standards.

Operation Safety consists of four main sections (the first three are also available online) in the eight section binder. Included with the WTCA Operation Safety binder are 20 Employee Safety Handbooks, eight plant warning posters and a CD that contains all of the safety modules, presented both as PowerPoint® slide decks as well as published training sessions that include pre-recorded audio narration, animated video effects and short video demonstrations where applicable. The CD also contains all of the printed materials, including a customizable binder saved as a Microsoft Word® document and printable checklists/downloads available for use in conjunction with the program. All of this information is also centrally located online at www.wtcatko.com/training/safety/index.php.

The first section is focused on safety culture and is intended for Safety Coordinators and Company Management. It outlines the program and its online courses and resources, and is meant to help management determine where the company should focus its efforts.

Also intended for management is the second section, Management Guidelines. This section is designed to guide management in the program's implementation with the use of the safety binder, online courses and other various resources.

Employee training is covered in the third section. Geared toward individual employee education, this section incorporates many critical safety topics.

The final section of the program involves certification. Not only can your plant achieve Operation Safety Certification, but individuals like Safety Managers and shop employees can also seek certification. This section outlines the specific criteria necessary for maintaining your plant's certification, such as daily and quarterly checklists, posters highlighting safety tips, safety meeting forms, policy checklists, employee training records, recordkeeping information and much more.

Where else can you find all of these effective ideas and helpful tools focused on the structural building components industry in one place? WTCA's Operation Safety Program makes your transition into a culture of safety easy by compiling resources, setting a practical and feasible plan to achieve a safe and healthy workplace, and offering a certification program. For more information about Operation Safety, visit www.wtcatko.com. **SBC**



In October of 2005, Casmin's President, Mark Casp (left) accepted the Liberty Mutual Gold Safety Award from Jack Farley (right), a loss prevention agent for Liberty Mutual. One of just four plaques awarded in the entire country that year, Casmin was presented with this honor for improving its EMR by 500 percent.

More than Magic

Continued from page 48

mentioned, their composite banding material ensures that not only no one in-house, but also no one on the jobsite, gets injured when the trusses are removed from their bundles.

Taking It Seriously

Touring the plant with the safety coordinator is a great way to get the inside scoop on Casmin's safety program, but you have to wonder—is it hard to be the safety director? Dan and the management team at Casmin have made a commitment to a safe and healthy workplace, and that means that you're not always everyone's favorite person, especially when they don't want to wear their safety goggles. "Actually, I really enjoy my position," Dan related. "Occasionally I get a sideways glance, but it's not like they're muttering under their breath 'Oh brother, here comes the safety guy.' In fact, more often than not, if I'm out in the plant, someone will come up to me and point out a safety concern that I need to assess. It's become a team approach from the top down."

Armed with an exceptional safety coordinator, an active safety committee and an exemplary company-wide safety culture, the pièce de resistance will come as no surprise. In October of 2005, Casmin's President, Mark Casp, accepted the Liberty Mutual Gold Safety Award. One of just four plaques awarded in the entire country that year, Casmin was presented with this honor for improving its EMR by 500 percent, bringing the once extreme 1.47 down to under .9—a remarkable achievement.

Establishing a solid safety program and safety culture that's woven into the fibers of your company's core corporate values is the happiest ending you could hope for in a fairytale. And, through time and devotion, that is exactly how this component manufacturer's story ends. To this, the plaque's final words ring true, "Liberty Mutual Group proudly recognizes the employees of Casmin, Inc. for Outstanding Safety Performance," and...so do we. **SBC**

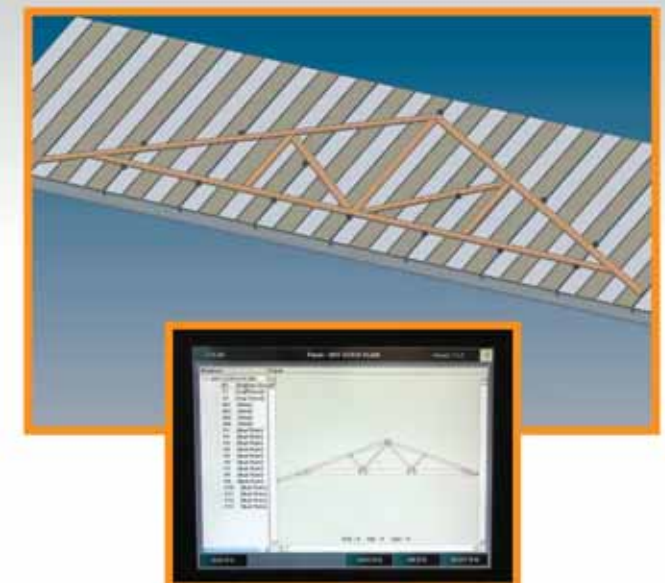
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