

Situation

Noffsinger Manufacturing is a family-owned company founded in 1924 in Greeley, Colorado. For over 90 years, they have been providing the agricultural industry with belted chains, hook chains, wire belts, rollers, and sprockets that assist with harvesting, sorting, separating, conveying, and processing crops.

Challenge

A manufacturing plant can be a dangerous environment in general, but Noffsinger faces unique challenges because of the specialized equipment they use in the manufacturing process. While they had an in-house resource responsible for safety, that person wore many hats, and Noffsinger's EHS compliance initiatives tended to be reactive rather than proactive, resulting in several serious injuries and steep fines levied by OSHA in the 1990s and early 2000s. Unguarded machine hazards posed a particular challenge, as Noffsinger struggled to find a solution that would work with their specialized machinery. One particular type of machine, "wire crimpers," were cited by OSHA as a hazard, however despite having tried many prototypes to guard the machines, Noffsinger had still not identified a workable solution.

"We were living in a state of constant worry that OSHA was going to swoop in and we were woefully unprepared for that."

Dean Hearl | General Manager

Solution

Noffsinger hired Hellman & Associates to perform a COMPLIANCEAction Assessment at their Greeley, Colorado facility in September 2016. The initial assessment identified 79 potential deficiencies that could have resulted in OSHA citations and/or penalties.

At the same time, H&A conducted a comprehensive machine guarding assessment, videoing the machinery in operation, interviewing employees and management as to equipment usage, and proposing various physical barriers that would enhance safety without impeding normal operations.

To help address the recommendations resulting from the risk and machine guarding assessments, Noffsinger signed up for H&A's ASSUREDComplianceSM annual partnership program. Noffsinger and H&A worked together to prioritize items for correction and began a systematic effort to eliminate hazards and issues that could result in OSHA citations and/or employee injuries.

- H&A helped Noffsinger form a safety committee that meets quarterly and is active in identifying and mitigating hazards. Employees are rewarded for their participation with paid time off.
- H&A conducts onsite safety training and also developed new hire safety orientation training that can be delivered by Noffsinger staff.
- H&A performs monthly site assessments to identify potential hazards and track progress on eliminating and/or adequately managing each risk.
- A machine guarding prototype was tested by employees and management and was implemented in the wire crimping operation.

“The H&A team provided the technical expertise and skill set we were lacking in-house. They’re knowledgeable, possess excellent management skills, and get along well with everybody.”

Dean Hearl | General Manager

Results

After hiring H&A, Noffsinger experienced its first injury-free year in company history. Their workers’ compensation insurance modification rate has dropped from 1.4 to 0.7, a record low for the company, and they are now able to solicit more competitive bids from insurance brokers.

Noffsinger has since hired H&A to perform COMPLIANCEAction Assessments at their Filer, Idaho and Menahga, Minnesota plants.

“The most important thing for me that happened as a result of our engagement with H&A is that they have helped us instill a culture of safety. We’ve rolled out new job descriptions where safety is the #1 criterion, and H&A’s regular presence signifies to our employees that we are taking safety seriously.”

Monty Seitz, Controller and Chief Financial Officer