

Dominion East Ohio Partners with Veriforce® to Improve Management of Contractor Safety

For Dominion, one of the country's largest producers and transporters of energy, safety is the number one core value. Michael Donahue, Manager of Gas Safety and Training for subsidiary Dominion East Ohio Gas, underscores the company's attitude:

"We want our workers to go home the same way they came to work – with no injuries – each and every day." In addition to its ongoing business of supplying natural gas to 1.2 million customers, Dominion East Ohio is engaged in a 25-year, multi-billion dollar program to replace 5,500 miles of bare steel and cast iron pipeline infrastructure in the state of Ohio. Throughout all of its work, the company takes pride in its continuing focus on putting in place robust safety programs.

An AGA session on contractor safety, however, prompted Donahue to consider that there might be a gap in their safety program. The AGA speaker highlighted the importance of a company's contractors when looking at efforts to improve safety. While Dominion East Ohio rigorously follows operator qualification requirements for contractors, Donahue realized the company had very little insight into its contractors' safety profiles. Gaining an understanding of contractor safety practices became the next safety improvement priority.

When considering how to get a handle on contractor safety, Donahue had a pretty good idea where to look for assistance. Dominion East Ohio had an established, productive relationship with Veriforce, a provider of compliance solutions for the energy & utilities industry. The company already relied on VeriSource™, a compliance management software solution from Veriforce, as well as Veriforce services to help in managing its OQ and drug and alcohol programs. Donahue reached out to explore what capabilities Veriforce could offer to manage contractor safety.

First, Dominion East Ohio needed a solution that would enable the company to collect information on contractors' safety programs and performance for prequalification purposes and then track their safety status on an ongoing basis. It was also important to the company to

be able to adapt its successful employee safety observation process for use with contractors. Through the employee observation process, supervisors observe employees on the job, actively coaching them on observed unsafe behaviors and commending them on the things they are doing well – for example, taking the extra time needed to do things right.

Veriforce responded with a solution that met all of these objectives. With the aid of VeriSource Safety Compliance Management software, Dominion East Ohio is able to provide its field inspectors with a safety observation checklist specifically designed for use with contractor personnel. Field inspectors can record observations, identified by contractor

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company and date, then upload their observations to VeriSource. By reviewing the observations, Dominion East Ohio staff can easily spot recurring issues (e.g., failure of a contractor's personnel to wear hardhats) and take appropriate corrective actions.

VeriSource also greatly facilitates the contractor onboarding process. Now, contractors that want to do work for Dominion East Ohio must first submit information on their safety policies, as well as statistics on their safety records. Through the contractor view of the VeriSource web-based application, potential contractors can easily see what they must submit, upload the required information, and verify that they've met all requirements.

Dominion East Ohio staff can then review contractor safety policies, check for any OSHA citations, compare contractor statistics against company prerequisites (e.g., EMR of 1 or less), quickly determine whether a contractor meets all safety requirements, and identify which contractors have the best safety performance. For those accepted, the information submitted becomes part of the contractor profile.

In addition, active contractors are required to provide quarterly reports on their safety status. VeriSource gives Dominion East Ohio a central place to track safety performance for all of its contractors, including the reports submitted by contractors and field observation reports. "Along with environmental compliance, technical compliance, and productivity, safety is a key component of the performance metrics we have begun putting together on contractors," says Gary Penny, Program Development Manager for Dominion East Ohio Gas. "I can see that the data we are able to collect in VeriSource will add valuable additional visibility in managing our contractor resources." Penny and his team can see safety trends, identify contractors with poor safety practices, and generally make better decisions. VeriSource also enables them to get a consolidated view of contractor status on OQ and drug and alcohol compliance, as well as safety.

Donahue observes that Dominion East Ohio and its peer companies in the AGA are all very serious about contractor safety. "If your contractors are working safely, that's an excellent reflection on your company and its commitment not only to your employees and customers, but also to the contractors themselves, and to the communities in which you operate."

Technology is a key tool for helping to fulfill that commitment. According to Donahue, "This has really opened our eyes to where our contractors stand from the perspective of safety. Plus, the processes we've put in place put contractors on notice that our company is serious about safety." With Veriforce support, Donahue and Penny look forward to taking the Dominion East Ohio safety program to the next level.