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Safety is a prime concern for engineers

by David Kubicek

With hazards for engineers ranging from working with toxic materials to high voltage equipment, safety is a No. 1 concern for the industry.

Dean Epperson, senior project manager and safety director at EAD, said one of the firm's biggest safety precautions is modeling safe behaviors to one another.

"Our team members have developed safety habits like pointing out potential trip hazards or head knockers for people following them through an unfamiliar plant," he said.

Each new employee goes through a face-to-face safety orientation during their on-boarding process. The orientation starts by sharing management's commitment to safety and builds on specific requirements and behavior-based safety.

"We prepare ourselves for on-site work by planning our tasks, understanding the specific hazards and getting to know the local personnel," Epperson said. "Standard contractor training provided by our clients is typically very appropriate, but it is important for our team to also become familiar with any temporary site conditions and getting a feel for the local safety culture."

Simple actions like touring the entire area before diving into focused tasks help with recognizing potential hazards in the area.

EAD holds a "safety huddle" every Friday morning to provide interactive training on multiple safety topics. The firm has a different employee presenter each week who



EAD's Dean Epperson, senior project manager/safety director, left, and Mike Flohr, production supervisor at Industrial Panel Solutions, with a Zero Energy Utility-disconnect Switch (ZEUS), which simplifies shutting down equipment for maintenance or repairs.

provides a PowerPoint presentation and Q&A session and often brings in outside sources to provide safety information.

The firm provides Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10- and 30-hour training for its employees depending on their capacity in the field. OSHA 30 is provided to anyone who will supervise or manage others.

"We prequalify our company with many clients through client qualification [web]sites such as ISNetwork, ApprUV, First Verify, and Construct Secure," Epperson said. "Many clients have prerequisites prior to being allowed on their sites. These [web]sites allow us to assign site-specific training to our employees, giving them insight to our clients' safety requirements."

the main enclosure, lowering the risk for an arc flash hazard during maintenance of the interior panel devices.

The National Safety Council-Nebraska is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to reduce injuries and save the lives of Nebraskans through education, training, and advocacy, according to Vice President of Business Development Susan Booth.

"Last year I held several roundtable meetings with some of our members and asked what type of training or information that their teams needed," Booth said. "Overwhelming response was the need for certain job types to receive safety training, in particular HR professionals and supervisors."

Over the past year the organization worked with Human Resources Association of the Midlands (HRAM) to develop a program that allows HR professionals to receive Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) continuing education units (CEU) through a program called Safety for the HR Professional.

"We found that often, especially in small companies, the HR professional was being tasked with safety or tasked with supporting the safety person," Booth said. "This year we are launching the Safety for Supervisors certificate program — again focused on helping those individuals understand the basics of safety so that they can be more supportive."

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