UCD Pre-Inspection Report

Challenge:

The Lab Safety Review program at UC Davis uses a model where lab safety professionals are embedded into the colleges and have offices in the same buildings as the labs. As liaisons between the labs and Safety Services, the lab safety professionals work closely with the Primary Investigators (PIs) and lab managers to connect them with EH&S services and to support them through the process of annual lab safety reviews.

When the COVID pandemic hit, the program was faced with a critical decision on whether inspections could continue without compromising the health and safety of the lab safety professionals and the researchers. The program's Lab Safety Review (LSR) team began to reimagine how to continue the work that, until then, had been providing in-person customer service with great success. If inspections continued, how could the LSR team ensure that their inspectors weren't the vector of the disease as they performed their work? With many other departments choosing remote work models during the pandemic, LSR supervisors wondered how it would work for them and if it would be effective.

Solution:

To answer the question of the possibility of remote inspections, the LSR team asked what kind of information could they readily get that did not require in-person contact. They knew they needed a current snapshot of the labs that included the types of research being conducted and the associated hazardous activities. The answer was found in the Risk and Safety Solutions pre-inspection report. This report was already aggregating critical data elements such as:

- Hazard types – biological, chemical, radiological, and physical
- Assessment certification status
- Previous inspection dates and incidents
- Chemical inventory certification date
- High-hazard chemicals in the lab
- New lab members
- Incomplete training
- Assigned PPE

Using analytics reporting of their top findings, the LSR team was able to demonstrate to leadership within EH&S that the pre-inspection tool was already capturing many of their most frequent findings and that remote inspections were feasible. With the buy-in from leadership, Lab Safety Review supervisors created a remote inspection plan that used the pre-inspection data as the basis for a newly designed remote questionnaire. With the assistance of the Risk and Safety Solutions' Customer Success Team, the questionnaire was uploaded and ready for use within 24 hours.

Benefits:

- Summarizes the data from all lab safety programs for a PI into one location
- Allows the viewer to see the status of safety and compliance items for any location
- Displays the hazard codes of chemicals and indicates which require Standard Operating Procedures
- Indicates compliance with required training
- Provides business continuity during a workplace disruption
- Creates flexibility for scheduling and planning when PIs can't meet in person

Results:

During the pandemic work interruption, the Lab Safety Review program was able to keep up with the 1,200 per year inspections, including 900 lab reviews, 200 controlled substance inspections, and 100 radiation inspections while at the same time mitigating the hazards, keeping the risk of COVID transmission low, and keeping inspectors employed.

Now that they are back to in-person inspections, they are also not faced with a year's worth of backlogged inspections had they stopped inspecting completely.

Looking forward, Lab Safety Review supervisors have now factored the pre-inspection tool into their business continuity plans with the expectation that remote inspections, which rely on the pre-inspection tool data, will be a key part of any future business disruption.