

You Have Options

By Dallas Babcock

In my previous article, I discussed the exorbitant costs associated with industrial accidents, many of which are attributable directly to human error stemming from insufficient training. With statistics like these, it is easy to reach the decision to train, but then comes the difficult part: how to train. In this installment, I discuss some of the options and their individual advantages.

In today's technologically advanced world, there are several training options. The Internet, of course, has granted resources to anyone with a phone line and a computer. Keep in mind, though, that access to information does not in itself ensure its accuracy, pertinence and quality. Web-based training offers some attractive advantages. Enabling the students to proceed through the field of study at their own pace is conducive to the learning process. The lack of interaction between the student and the instructor can be overcome if the program is properly designed and managed. As with all training programs, care must be taken to select a program that is pertinent to the facility and that the instructional staff and materials behind the program are current and keeping up with industry trends. You also must be careful in the selection of a "canned" program vs. one that is designed particularly for your facility. As you might expect, typically there is a distinct difference in price between the two.

In-house training has been the standard for ammonia refrigeration operators. Costs of in-house training are easier to maintain and keep at a minimum. And, to meet government regulations, at least some operator training must be conducted in house. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations both require that operators be trained on site about specific operating procedures. Operators also must complete refresher courses a minimum of every three years. You want to select an in-house trainer who is versed in the subject matter -- not just anyone can transfer knowledge effectively.

Another way to train your staff is to contract an organization to train on site. An advantage of this method over traditional in-house training is the access to expert trainers without having to maintain a staff of trainers.

Academic training away from your facility is another training method. This type of training offers the advantage of expert trainers as with on-site training; it can compete with web-based training on the financial level; and it removes the student from the distractions of a facility or at a home.

Whichever methods you use to train your employees, the benefits are sure to make themselves known in the form of higher retention rates, lower utility costs, reduced downtime and -- the big one -- fewer accidents and near misses.

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