

## 2010 Innovations Awards Program

### Application

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State: Kansas

Program Category: Human Resources/Education

Program Name: Safety and Health Outreach Program

Administering Agency: Kansas Department of Labor

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## **Kansas Safety and Health Outreach Program**

### 1. Description of the Program

The Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) developed a direct marketing campaign targeting employers with high incidences of workplace accidents as a means of reaching a goal to reduce work-related accidents and fatalities. Through a series of mailings that promote the free safety consultation program provided by the Division of Industrial Safety and Health within KDOL, employers were encouraged to improve their safety record and productivity by participating in the free program.

### 2. How Long Has the Program Been Operational?

The first mailings went out in June 2008 and the final mailing of the initial campaign was mailed in January 2009. A second campaign is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2010.

### 3. Program Purpose and Issues Addressed

During the 10-year period of 1995 – 2005, the rate of workplace accidents in Kansas saw a steady and significant decline. In 2006-2007, we began to see a slight increase in that statistic. Because Kansas places a high priority on workplace safety and health, we wanted to take action quickly to reverse what threatened to become a growing trend.

### 4. Specific Activities in Chronological Order

We quickly decided we could have an impact on the rate of workplace accidents in the state if we could reach more employers with the free safety and health consultations provided by our Division of Industrial Safety and Health, but we wanted to have a greater impact than would be possible by simply doing a blanket marketing campaign to employers. We wanted to target employers that had the highest incidence of workplace accidents.

A major challenge to conducting this direct marketing campaign was finding a way to respect the requirements of maintaining confidentiality of our Workers Compensation records related to workplace accidents and illnesses. Developing a process to achieve our goal of targeting high-incident employers while maintaining the confidentiality of our Workers Compensation records was our first activity.

- 1) We developed a process that would have our Labor Market Information Services (LMIS) division analyze the Workers Compensation data to identify target employers. The Division of Industrial Safety and Health would never receive information about those employers -- they would not be involved in developing the list or in the mailing of materials to those employers. When they were contacted to conduct safety consultations, they would have no way of knowing whether the employer contacted them because of the mailings or just due to our normal outreach efforts.

- 2) With the process identified, representatives in our Workers Compensation division pulled data on employers that included incident rates, lost-time rates and types and severity of accidents and sent it to our LMIS division.
- 3) Representatives from LMIS reviewed the data to identify employers with high incident rates, high lost-time rates and greater severity of accidents or illnesses. They then culled the list down, keeping just private employers and eliminating those with more than 500 or less than 10 employees. From the culled down list, the top 300 employers were targeted for mailings.
- 4) While the list was being developed, KDOL's Marketing and Communications Division was developing the mail pieces for the campaign and setting the timeline for mailing. It was important that the campaign pieces not single out the targeted employers as "bad actors" due to their safety records. None of the materials approached employers in that manner. The pieces were designed simply to clarify the benefits, both to productivity and the bottom line, of an effective workplace safety program.

The campaign would consist of four mailings. The first piece included a letter outlining the benefits of an effective workplace safety program and provided information about the free safety consultation program through the Kansas Department of Labor. It was set to mail in early June. The second piece, to be mailed two weeks after the first, was a large postcard that reiterated the benefits to businesses of workplace safety and directed recipients to the KDOL Web site for information on the free safety consultation program. The third piece was scheduled to mail four months after the second mailing. It included a safety brochure that outlined the costs of workplace accidents – to employees and employers. It again outlined the benefits of an effective safety program and promoted the free safety consultation services, as well as the safety awards programs administered through KDOL. In addition to the brochure, the mailing included a hand-written postcard from Secretary of Labor Jim Garner encouraging employers to call the agency to learn more about the safety consultation program. The final piece was set to mail the first week of January. It was a large postcard with a New Year's resolution theme.

- 5) The mailing database was delivered to our mailing room operations, where all addresses were checked to identify any bad addresses. Bad addresses were sent back to LMIS where correct addresses were confirmed and the database was updated.
- 6) With the mailing pieces completed and approved, they were sent to the printer. The first mailing was sent out the first week of June, 2008. Subsequent mailings adhered to the original schedule.
- 7) As requests for safety consultations came to the Division of Industrial Safety and Health, the names of the companies making the requests were forwarded to the Communications Division, where they were

compared against the mailing list. In this way, we were able to identify requests that were made as a result of the mailing, and still not identify those employers to our Industrial Safety and Health employees.

- 8) In March 2009, we were able to confirm that the response rate to the mailings was about 5 percent, topping most accepted industry averages.

5. Why is the Program a New and Creative Approach?

While many states offer free safety consultation programs, we are not aware of any that are using actual accident reporting information to reach out to employers with high incidences of accident rates in a targeted way to promote the program. . Previously, the concern about maintaining the confidentiality of Workers Compensation records related to on-the-job accidents and illnesses has precluded this type of coordinated effort to promote the program to the employers who stand to gain the most from it. Developing a method to respect confidentiality and target employers most in need of the safety consultation service was critical to the success of this program.

6. What Were the Program's Start-Up Costs?

One of the best features of this effort was that there were relatively few additional costs associated with it. Information regarding workplace accidents and illnesses at Kansas businesses was already being collected by our Division of Workers Compensation, so there was no additional work required to compile that information. Preparing the mailing list took some additional staff time from our Labor Market Information Services Division, but did not require any new technology or staffing. Mail list preparation took about 50 hours from a single staff person.

A variety of staff members within the Communications Division worked on content for the direct mail pieces. In all, about 10 hours of staff time was spent on writing and editing the content. Our Graphics department spent an additional 15 hours designing the pieces and coordinating mailings.

The direct costs of the program were for printing and mailing. Those costs totaled \$1,100. With staff time, total cost for the program was under \$5,000.

7. What are the Program's Annual Operational Costs?

Printing and mailing costs are the direct expenses associated with this effort. They remain relatively stable at \$1,100 to \$1,500 from year to year. Staff time varies because we're able to use the same printed pieces for the mailing two consecutive years. While we identify employers with high incidences of workplace accidents and illnesses to receive the mailings, we do not send to the same employers two years in a row, so the same campaign pieces can be used for at least two years before rewriting and redesign is necessary. Overall, annual costs range from \$3,000 to \$6,000.

8. How is the Program Funded?

Funding for the program comes from the OSHA 21d grant funds the agency receives from the U.S. Department of Labor. Funds for this program are part of our normal grant and do not constitute additional grant funds.

9. Legislation, Executive Order or Regulations Required?

This program did not require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations.

10. What Equipment, Technology and Software are Used to Operate and Administer This Program?

We use existing equipment and software to prepare materials for the campaign. Data regarding workplace accidents and illnesses is compiled by the Division of Workers Compensation using a Microsoft Access database. Mailing lists are compiled using Microsoft Excel. The mail pieces were designed using InDesign. Responses are tracked using Microsoft Excel.

11. Did This Program Originate in Your State and Are You Aware of Similar Programs in Other States?

As far as we can tell, we are the only state that has tried a campaign for free safety consultation service targeted to employers with high incidences of accidents. It was considered unique enough that we were asked to present information regarding the program to the 2009 OSHA Consultation Conference.

12. Has the Program Been Fully Implemented?

This program has been fully implemented.

13. Evaluate Program Effectiveness Addressing Defined Problems

Our goal in establishing this program was to find a way to use the valuable information we were already collecting related to workplace accidents and illnesses to positively impact the state's record related to workplace injuries and fatalities. We already had the data we needed to identify high-risk employers, and we already had a free safety consultation program in place. The obstacle in our way was a confidentiality requirement that did not allow us to share with our Industrial Safety and Health Division workplace accident and illness information collected from employers through our Workers Compensation Division.

The program we established was effective in overcoming this obstacle. We are now able to use the information we collect on workplace injuries and fatalities to market safety consultation services in a targeted way. And, we've maintained all confidentiality requirements.

The program has also allowed us entry into 15 new workplaces around the state, all of which had been identified as high-risk employers. These are workplaces that had not responded to previous, blanket promotional efforts related to the

safety consultation program. That represents a 5 percent response rate from our direct mail campaign, which is higher than the industry average of 2-3 percent.

Given that we are only in our second year of the program, it is too soon to know whether the desired impact to statewide statistics on workplace injuries and fatalities has been achieved. We do know that businesses that participate in the safety consultation program generally see a 10 percent to 25 percent improvement in the number and severity of workplace accidents. We expect to see similar improvements in workplaces that have participated in the program as part of this targeted campaign, and that should ultimately result in a positive impact on statewide statistics.

14. How Has the Program Grown and/or Changed Since Its Inception?

The program remains basically unchanged since inception, except that we ensure we're sending to new employers in each year. Based on the successful response, we intend to expand the number of employers targeted for the campaign in future years.

15. What Limitations/Obstacles Might Other States Face?

This is a program any state should be able to replicate. Every state is required to collect information related to workplace accidents and illnesses, so every state should be able to identify employers with high incidences of accidents or high accident severity. Every state has the opportunity to participate in the OSHA 21d program through the U.S. Department of Labor, which provides for the free safety consultations. Because there is a matching-fund requirement in the program, a few states opt not to participate. In the majority of states where the free safety consultation program exists, the only obstacle that has kept it from working together with the Workers Compensation Division has been the confidentiality requirements surrounding the workplace accident data.

This program provides a template for overcoming the confidentiality requirements in a way that allows needed services to be targeted specifically to the employers most in need of this service. We have also shown that the program can be undertaken with minimal expense, so costs should not be a limiting factor. Availability of staff for additional onsite workplace visits may be a limiting factor in some states.