



CASE STUDY - SANTEE COOPER



STATE ELECTRIC UTILITY ACCESSES UL'S OHM SOLUTION ONLINE TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

Santee Cooper is a household name in South Carolina. Named after two rivers, the South Carolina Public Service Authority is the state's largest power producer. About 62 percent of Santee Cooper's 1,755 employees work in the field. The utility serves approximately 2 million users in 46 counties, 29 large industries, wholesale and municipal customers, and the Charleston Air Force Base. It has carried out its mission to be "the state's leading resource for improving quality of life" for more than 75 years.



THE CHALLENGE

Given occupational hazards inherent to the utility industry, Santee Cooper is subject to an array of medical surveillance requirements. In addition, it strives to promote employee health and safety through training, injury prevention and other risk management efforts. Its widely dispersed workforce is predominantly male, with an average age of 45.

To help ensure regulatory compliance, three certified occupational health nurses (COHNs) staff a health and wellness center at Santee Cooper's corporate headquarters in Moncks Corner near Charleston, while two additional COHNs travel to generating stations and other field locations throughout the state. The nurses work under the supervision of a contracted occupational medicine physician.

"Our folks who use OHM are excited about it. It has improved their quality of life, from reporting, to nursing, to employee health management. It is an incredible product. I only see it getting better and growing. OHM is a really powerful tool."

Ray Smith, Director,
HR Information Technology, Santee Cooper

The entire medical team needs an efficient, automated system to easily access health records and manage routine activities such as screening exams, annual flu shots, first aid, case management, fitness for duty and return to work – all while protecting the privacy of employees. The team also needs software to create a "firewall" between employee health and human resources (HR) functions.

THE SOLUTION

Santee Cooper relies on Occupational Health Manager (OHM), UL Workplace Health and Safety's solution for the management of employee health department data and functions, to meet its daily needs, said Ray Smith, the utility's director of HR information technology.

Santee Cooper installed OHM in 1998. Through changes in ownership and numerous upgrades, it has remained a loyal user. When Smith

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joined the HR department in 2006, he helped introduce technological advances such as fixed-site hardware and Bluetooth wireless technology. Today Santee Cooper uses the web-enabled version of OHM so occupational health staff can use iPads and laptops at any location to record data in real time during encounters and store information in OHM via a secure, online connection to UL.

Since going live on the UL-hosted version of OHM in November 2012, Smith said Santee Cooper has upgraded twice – leapfrogging from Version 7.2 to Version 7.5. Now it has the opportunity to take advantage of new features including a:

- health portal that allows employees to schedule their own clinic appointments, complete consent forms and questionnaires, and access their health records
- mobile vaccine application (available on iPad and iPad mini) that automates eligibility and consent forms, captures electronic signatures and automatically produces related documentation

RESULTS

OHM saves staff time and is cost-effective. “It’s a big win for us,” Smith said.

For example, field nurses used to have to return to an office to manually key in the results of health evaluations, sometimes as many as 230 exams over a period of a few weeks. With OHM online, the process is portable, accessible and fully automated.

A separate HR data management system “feeds” data into OHM nightly. “We are able to reassure workers that their data is safe and treated in a confidential manner,” Smith said. Another important attribute is instant access to Medical Disability Advisor guidelines, a trusted source for predicting disability durations and managing return to work following an injury or illness.

The corporation has demonstrated its commitment to occupational health and safety by investing in sound systems and practices. “Employee safety is our number-one goal,” Smith said, “Our president really means it when he says he wants zero incidents.”

In combination with in-house and online training courses from UL EHS Sustainability and other initiatives, executives say OHM functions contribute to the utility’s overall workplace health and safety

management objectives. Incident rates help provide an illustration. Jim Coleman, manager, occupational safety and health at Santee Cooper, reports:

- The national average incident rate for all electric utilities (NAICS Code 2211) was 3.2 in 2011 and 2.8 in 2010 (2012 data not yet available).
- By comparison, Santee Cooper’s overall incident rate was 1.21 in 2012, 1.02 in 2011 and 1.63 in 2010.

Meanwhile, Smith says the opportunity to leverage OHM to support Santee Cooper’s objectives exemplifies his passion for innovation in information technology. “There is always going to be change in IT,” he said. “It’s exciting to see the efficiencies we have gained, even compared to a year ago. In the past, we had to plot out three or four years to accommodate upgrade capabilities. In the past few months, we upgraded OHM twice – and it was a seamless process.”

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