

EARNING VPP STAR STATUS IN A DANGEROUS PROFESSION—

HOW EVANS ROOFING COMPANY, INC. BECAME THE ONLY ROOFING COMPANY TO ACHIEVE VPP

BY DAN NOWAK

CORPORATE RISK SPECIALIST, EVANS ROOFING COMPANY, INC.

Evans Roofing Company, Inc., (ERC) is a commercial roofing and wall panel contractor located in upstate New York. Our two subsidiary companies, Charles F. Evans Company, Inc. (union) and CFE Inc. (non-union) both proudly achieved VPP Merit recognition in 2008 and more recently, Star status in 2012. These two companies are the only roofing companies in the United States to achieve this honor and both were re-approved at the VPP Star level in August 2014. This achievement requires continual dedication and commitment from all associates.





Roofing is the sixth most dangerous profession in the country. Rooftop safety changes each minute of each day, so every determination must be made to prepare for these challenges. In an effort to improve safety, ERC committed to a formal total quality management (TQM) program in 1991, focusing on three core values: safety, quality and customer satisfaction. This led to a paradigm of how safety was to be integrated into projects.

The TQM program allows associates to get actively involved in sharing ideas directly from the field. Every associate is encouraged to complete a written TQM ideas form and submit their suggestions for review. Once an idea is submitted, it is then handed to a quality improvement team (QIT) to be discussed for merit and practicality. If the TQM idea is determined to have merit, it is approved and put into action. The process of getting associates to submit their ideas to management has led to success within our organization. Many submissions are now everyday best practices. This has raised us to a new level of commitment to safety and quality. With this said, we are recognized as a leader in the roofing industry with the simple message of continuous improvement.

We would like to take you on a journey through our everyday best practices from start to finish. After ERC is awarded a job and the contract is in place, we focus on how to keep our associates safe, from beginning to end. Basic things, such as a site-specific fall/rescue plan along with our job hazard analysis (JHA), are developed. The JHA describes the safety system that is to be installed and any other precautionary measures that are to be taken.

The fall/rescue plan is then communicated to all associates and we check to make sure everyone understands and agrees upon it. Every associate involved then signs off on the documents.

New Employee Mentoring Program

Once our safety system is set up and the roof is loaded with materials and supplies, our associates then have a safety huddle to discuss the operations. During this time, any associates that are in our new employee mentoring program are assigned an experienced mentor if one has not already been assigned.

Over the next two months, the new associate works closely with their mentor to learn everyday operations, such as proper setup and placement of job boxes, making sure all appropriate materials are in First Aid Kits and learning our fire extinguisher cone best practice. For example, part of the training focuses on the proper placement of fire extinguishers to avoid them tipping over. We take a regular orange safety cone and cut the top off, allowing us to place the fire extinguisher down inside to keep it upright and stable. We then label the cone with a “fire extinguisher sticker.” All of this helps our new associate gain the skills and knowledge for their new journey in the commercial roofing industry.

New associates are required to carry their pocket-sized safety manuals along with their mentoring packets. They are also issued a lime green hard hat sticker to signify that they are in the mentoring program. Once a week, they review that week’s mentoring session with their mentor or team leader. This process encourages our new hires to ask questions and it helps our mentors and team leaders check for complete understanding. After the two months are over

and all mentoring sessions are complete, the new associate is recognized with an orange hard hat sticker, signifying his or her completion of the mentoring program.

Going Electronic

In an effort to maintain pace in a fast and competitive industry, we decided to “go electronic” for our comprehensive safety and health program. In 2013, we made a financial commitment to reduce project paperwork by purchasing electronic tablets for all field supervision. These tablets allow information to be shared in real-time with field and office associates.

During the course of a project, our teams are not only responsible for maintaining and adjusting the safety practices as needed, but also for holding weekly team meetings, called “tool box talks,” (TBT) along with conducting a site safety audit. Not only do our EH&S specialists conduct a weekly safety audit for each site, it is also the responsibility of the team leader, foreman, project manager and corporate office to complete and submit a safety audit, as well. This process helps hold us accountable on all levels while keeping up with our high standards for safety. The safety audit processes are very user-friendly, quick and allow real-time reporting for our managers conducting them. As you scroll down through the checklist, there is an easy “Yes,” “No” or “N/A” questionnaire for evaluators to fill out. If there is an item that is not in compliance, damaged or needs to be “red tagged,” “No” is selected. We then have the ability to take a picture of the issue and, if possible, abate or correct the problem and upload the before-and-after photos to show how a problem was solved. Once the audit is complete, it is sent out via email directly from the job site in real time. To further promote accountability, we can also use our system to assign an issue ticket to a team leader or project manager. When they have resolved the issue, they can now email it back out to their supervisors to show how and when the problem was solved. Both the TBT and the safety audits can then be emailed out onsite and uploaded to a shared drive for the company’s personnel to access.

QR Code Tag System

To stress accountability, we have implemented a tagging system for safety equipment. Fall protection equipment, such as harnesses and

lanyards, are tagged with a QR code. At any time, these tags can be scanned with our tablets by using an app. Once scanned, our system will tell us the associate's name and product details such as the date of issue (DOI), date of manufacture (DOM), serial number and the last time it had a documented inspection as opposed to the daily visual inspection we require all associates to perform before using their assigned equipment.

Punch Cards

Although each individual associate is trained to conduct a visual walk-around inspection, we document these inspections before the equipment is used. Our associates use in-house punch cards for different equipment. We believe that different equipment requires different criteria. Our punch cards are specific to the equipment and are UV resistant, weather resistant, flexible and durable. They range from scaffolding, fork lifts, various aerial lifts and mobile fall protection carts, to name just a few. We inspect these items whether they are ours or a rental company's. This ensures that we take the time to do our due diligence when it comes to safety. The punch card has the inspection criteria written right on it. The proper associate will use the punch card and select the year, month and day. If all of the items on the inspection list are compliant, they will punch the "Y" on the Y/N that is next to the day of that month. Using the tablets, we can show proof that the inspections are being completed. We simply take a picture of the punch card that is attached to the equipment and upload it right into our safety audit reports.

Readily Accessible and Searchable Documents

Anyone at any time can access our tablets onsite. On the home screen, the main folders are accessible along with various other files or apps that we have found useful. The main folders include the safety data sheet (SDS) collections, safety manuals, equipment manuals, safety equipment manuals, safety checklists and policies and procedures.

SDS Collection—We now have all of our SDS right at our fingertips. All we have to do is select the manufacturer-product-type. This automatically shows specific SDS and all 16 parts. We update our records as the manufacturer updates them.

Safety Manuals—Our company safety manual is just a touch away. Associates can refer to the safety manual quickly when questions may arise.

We have both English and Spanish versions along with our OSHA 3165 and 3167 posters. The posters are displayed in every job box as well.

Equipment & Safety Equipment Manuals—All equipment manuals are now easy to access. If there is a troubleshooting question or if a new associate is being trained, the manual is there for review.

Safety Checklists—The safety checklist folder holds all of the criteria items for inspection of any equipment and also our site audits.

Policies-Procedures—This one is crucial for human resources. Sometimes on job sites, questions arise on what the exact policy or certain procedure for handling issues or items is. Associates can now quickly reference these documents and forms.

All of this touch-and-go technology that we've implemented into our safety culture has brought operations together, full circle, and maintains our accountability theme.

In March of this year, we presented our best practices at the Western New York State Safety Conference and won the 1st Annual Safety Innovation Award. This prestigious award, voted

on by peers, recognizes companies that have made an extraordinary effort to improve worker health and safety by continuously creating and applying new and better approaches to solving problems. This award would not have been possible without all of our incredibly intelligent and hard-working employees and we look forward to continuing to make strides in our safety program and continuing to develop and implement innovative solutions at Evans Roofing Company. 🏆

Dan Nowak began working in the safety field in 2003 as a team leader, safety representative and chainsaw safety instructor for the Pennsylvania Department of Labor. In 2011, he transitioned into the oil and gas sector where he represented EH&S and field coordination in both the seismic and fracking industries. Dan found what he considers to be his true home, Evans Roofing Company, Inc., in 2013 and is happy to be in the most safety-oriented company he has ever known.

Employee Participation Program—Simplified.

5 Simple Steps:

1. Choose action items.
2. Participate in activities.
3. Drop tracking/lotto card into dropbox.
4. Cards are shipped to A.I.M. for tabulation.
5. Participant receives award.

AIM 1-800-220-1818
AIMFORSAFETY.COM
Call us or visit us online for more info.