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INNOVATION: Educating product safety personnel

By **Steve Epner**

Friday, April 30, 2010



There are professionals working hard to protect the public. They manage programs so the products their companies produce are safe, properly produced, and tracked in the marketplace in case of unforeseen problems.



Steve Epner
Innovation

Approximately 18 months ago, Saint Louis University was introduced to the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization (ICPHSO) and the world of product safety. We were intrigued. The depth and value of this profession was invisible to most consumers.

The product safety field is growing and becoming more important in business. More demands, more regulation, more globalization have led many to the conclusion that more in depth education could be useful in the product safety profession.

The university started research into existing product safety professional and higher education. We did not find one business school program offering a major or focus in product safety management. Only a few business schools even

introduced the concept of product safety. No one appears to be taking a top level management view of product safety and how it affects the enterprise.

Last semester, as part of the Corporate Entrepreneurship and Innovation Class, a product safety case study was used. The students were amazed. It was their first introduction to the issues and considerations in safe product decision making.

As part of its stated mission to serve humanity, Saint Louis University has decided to begin working to enhance product safety education. After extensive interviews with business leaders, conversations with ICPHSO members, and approval of the Center for Supply Chain Management, the university will begin offering a professional certificate in product safety management that will start June 14, 15.

In designing the certificate program, there were three primary considerations. First, the program must provide professionals in the field with methods and processes that will help them manage a product safety program in their companies. Second, it has to have a deliverable result that adds value to the organization. Third, there needs to be a fiscal return for the efforts expended.

The course has been designed around a risk management approach. The program will use a documentation format that will assist professionals in evaluating the current status of their enterprise wide safety program. The end result will be a roadmap to improved control and

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reduced exposure. The participation of risk management and experienced attorneys helps to insure that participants will have the advantages that best practices can offer in terms of economic benefits from the program.

Saint Louis University has relied upon the support of ADK Information Services to assist in developing a safety program. Numerous industry practitioners have provided input to create the course content. The documentation effort is being led by a risk manager who is experienced in requirements of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the International Standards Organization (ISO)

The first class will be offered this June and will take about six months. There will be two, two-day sessions on campus and 10 web-based sessions covering the material and providing a rigorous methodology to create process improvement plans for any given organization.

Those interested in an overview of safety management may attend the initial two-day campus session as a reduced cost workshop. They will not earn a certificate, but will gain a working knowledge of the elements in a product safety program. The Missouri Bar Association has approved attendance at the Saint Louis University two-day product safety workshop on June 14 and 15 for 16.2 hours of continuing education credits for eligible attorneys.

For more information, please see the education tab at www.adksafetyinfo.com or <http://www.slu.edu/x35706.xml>.

Steve Epner is founder and president of the Brown Smith Wallace Consulting Group. The company assists clients with the integration of strategic business planning, information systems and tactical requirements. Epner currently is an Innovator in Residence at Saint Louis University. www.bswllc.com

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