

CUSTOMIZED CORPORATE-WIDE EHS TRAINING

A person wearing a yellow hazmat suit, a white helmet, and a respirator mask is working on a large black pipe. They are holding a tool, possibly a wrench, and the pipe has some red markings. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor setting with trees and a building.

IS IT THE RIGHT APPROACH FOR
YOUR ORGANIZATION?

A Findlay All Hazards White Paper

The All Hazards Training Center at
The University of Findlay

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INTRODUCTION

Findlay All Hazards (The All Hazards Training Center at The University of Findlay) has been developing and delivering environmental, health, and safety training coast-to-coast since 1986.

Throughout Findlay's history, a myriad of trends in Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) training have emerged.

One of these is a change in the top-level corporate approach to how training is managed. For corporations with numerous facilities, a decentralized approach to training, wherein local managers make key training decisions, has been a common model.

Many major companies, however, have recently switched to a centralized method, or what Findlay calls Customized Corporate-Wide Training. Many make this choice for similar reasons, even though their industries are quite diverse. This emerging trend toward a centralized model is found at leading brands in energy, chemical manufacturing and distribution, foods and beverages, and even in global news networks. In Findlay's experience, when a corporation has made the switch from a decentralized model of EHS training to a centralized approach, the training coordinators at the plant level have welcomed the idea.

Both decentralized and centralized training offer advantages that should be explored in relation to specific organizational goals.



THE DECENTRALIZED APPROACH

Historically, many major corporations have used a decentralized approach to EHS training. In most cases in this system, the corporate EHS department determined training requirements for each facility. These written requirements may have been applicable to the whole company, or very specific to some facilities. Corporate EHS managers then provided plants with guidance documents (which generally include timing and compliance parameters), and the facilities were expected to comply according to schedule. To assure completion, corporate staff may have performed EHS audits to gauge comprehension of recent training and compliance with EHS requirements, or they may have used another verification process. In most cases, the cost of EHS training was paid from the local facility's operating budget, rather than a corporate budget.

In some cases, the corporate EHS staff also conducted at least a portion of the corporate-wide training. This might have been true if a corporation had a long history of in-house training, or employed a corporate staff large enough to handle the workload.

The advantages of decentralized training from the local facility's perspective were flexibility, increased autonomy, and the ability to use local training vendors, which may have saved money. From the corporate headquarters' viewpoint, the advantage was that corporate EHS staff did not need to develop, maintain, update, and deliver the training programs they required. This was especially beneficial when the corporate staff was small.

One disadvantage has been that many companies with multiple locations did not have EHS professionals at the local level, as the locations were too small to justify the salary. In this case, the local HR Manager, Training Coordinator, or another staff position was charged with the responsibility of meeting safety standards. These people may have done a great job, but often did not have the time or resources to develop and deliver a training program that meets all corporate requirements and expectations.

While using this management model, many corporations discovered that select plants completed the required EHS training as expected, while others often did not. Most local managers created training with titles and goals similar to their counterparts in other locales. However, the training content could be remarkably different from facility to facility, depending on the experience of the local managers and the quality of local vendors they may select for assistance. Some locations got excellent instruction from local training companies, while others, who selected the cheapest local vendor they could find, received poor instruction, thanks to trainers who were not experienced or well-versed in regulations.

Many corporations continue to choose a decentralized approach. They may adhere to this method because it has served them adequately to date. Or they may do so because they feel that they do not have a corporate-level budget that can pay for a centrally controlled system of training. Others may use a decentralized plan due to the lack of knowledge about, or the inability to find, qualified corporate-wide training vendors who can help make a centralized approach a feasible option.

CENTRALIZED CORPORATE-WIDE TRAINING

The alternative to distributing training responsibilities to local managers is to use a centralized approach to EHS training. In this model, corporate safety managers conduct custom training themselves at each of their facilities, or they select a single qualified training expert to help them develop and deliver all or portions of the required corporate-wide EHS training. There are several advantages to centralized training, each with benefits for the organization and employees.

The first notable benefit is that the corporate office knows exactly what the EHS training content at each of their facilities is, since they had direct input into its development. It's very important to understand that this does not mean the training is conducted using a 'cookie cutter' approach. Well-developed training does not need to be exactly the same across all facilities. If necessary, the training content can be developed to include the corporate requirements and message while still providing flexibility to adapt to EHS issues specific to any facility in the company; thus, Findlay's term "Customized Corporate-Wide Training".

The quality of training provided can also be made consistent by this approach. If training vendors are selected to assist with the effort, they can be reviewed and audited by the corporate staff, as well as continually assessed at each facility where they conduct training. Consistency would then be regarded as a reflection of quality at all plants, rather than as a sameness between those locations.

Partner trainers also ease the workload of the corporate EHS staff. Ag-chem distributor WinField, a Land O' Lakes division, has found this to be true. "The company has grown and demands on our time have increased each year and made planning and holding our emergency response classes across the U.S. tougher," says WinField EHS Manager Clifton Landwehr. "It's important to make the training relevant to keep our employees engaged and to make the training experience meaningful. We partnered with Findlay," Landwehr says, "Now we have first class training with first-rate trainers who are willing to travel across the U.S. to accommodate our wide network of employees."

Customized Corporate-Wide Training offers direct advantages to the local facility as well. With this approach, local facilities do not need to interpret for themselves what the corporation's training requirements are. Nor are they compelled to have their facility EHS people conduct the training (which may or may not be the facility staff's forte). Further, they do not have to go through the process of selecting and dealing with a training vendor.

Other advantages of a customized approach include the ability to quickly address emerging EHS issues that may impact all, or a significant number of a corporation's facilities. A customized method will likely include a team of corporate and facility EHS staff members and a qualified and competent training vendor. This group can develop and deliver a far-reaching program, implement it quickly, and ensure consistency across all company sites. The corporate-wide approach has proven successful in identifying potential and existing gaps in EHS training programs at both the corporate and facility levels, and has also helped to mitigate company-wide EHS issues due to the consistency created by a centralized approach.

Most companies have both general and specific categories of training needs: There is almost certainly a safety message that applies to the company as a whole. And, just as likely is a need for particular safety skills at specific locales. Centralized approaches have been beneficial in both cases. Centralization helps to deliver a uniform safety message throughout the organization, thanks to a top-down communication framework. And a centralized EHS training system respects defined skill sets, putting them in place only where needed.

The Customized Corporate-Wide Training approach allows the option of providing regional training where one or more employees from each location attend specially targeted training programs. Synchronous online training courses can also be developed and delivered to employees in multiple locations, focusing on specialized training pertinent to a few people in each facility. Asynchronous online programs can also be created for the corporate intranet, or delivered via an outside training vendor. This way, new hires and those recently promoted can easily access and receive the basic corporate-wide EHS training as on-demand information.

In addition, if warranted, standardized “equipment kits” can be custom packaged to meet corporate standards and distributed at multiple facilities to be used to address similar maintenance or response-oriented issues. For example, standard dry decon kits, which contain protective clothing and supplies to deal with minor spills, can be customized to address the most common spill response situations in a particular plant. As a part of the related program, customized training can provide detailed instructions on the use of these kits.

A centralized approach may also offer a better means for corporate record keeping. The names of those employees who have completed various aspects of EHS training can be added to a corporate database, which can be managed by a qualified and competent training vendor, saving significant in-house hours. The training vendor can also record the extent of each person’s training and the frequency of that training. And the training supplier can also offer and register certifications, while notifying corporate EHS managers when refreshers and renewals are needed or when regulation changes mandate an upgrade in safety training.

Cost distribution is an important consideration when reviewing centralized training options. Corporations need not balk at a centralized approach because they have no central budget available to support it. Many corporations who take this approach actually charge back the cost of the training to each facility. This is usually determined by what level of training content (e.g., the number of courses or total number of training days) was delivered at each facility, or the number of people trained at each facility.

OPTIONS FOR EHS MANAGERS

If your approach to corporate-wide EHS training is decentralized, you may want to explore a customized corporate-wide training approach. Other major corporations have recently done so, and are already benefiting from that choice. To assist you, there are Certified Safety Professionals and qualified experts available, like Findlay All Hazards. These professionals have extensive experience developing and delivering customized EHS training for major corporate clients with facilities located coast-to-coast. Customized Corporate-Wide Training may well prove to be a much more efficient and cost effective approach than you thought possible.

**YOUR OPINION
COUNTS**

**CLICK TO
COMMENT AND
TAKE OUR
SURVEY**

WHAT FINDLAY CLIENTS ARE SAYING

More from
Clifton Landwehr, EHS Manager
WinField, a Land O'Lakes brand:

“Our EHS staff has been training our employees in emergency response procedures for years. Over the last several years, demands on our time have increased, and made holding our emergency response classes across the U.S. tougher and tougher. We considered partnering with a company to assist with training, but hadn't found a company out there that was the right fit.

In 2011, we found Findlay All Hazards - The partner we were looking for that complemented our team and shared our goal for great training. Findlay has the staff and resources to provide quality training anywhere in the United States.

We asked Findlay to provide trainers to lead our 24-hour Hazwoper emergency response training, and our annual refresher training classes. Findlay provided knowledgeable instructors who customized training to capture specifics of our industry. It's important to make the training relevant to keep our employees engaged and to make the experience meaningful. It's been a win-win for WinField. We have first class training with first-rate trainers who are willing to travel across the US to accommodate our wide network of employees.

With Findlay All Hazards on board, we are confident that WinField continues to offer the best training possible for our employees without having to add internal staff to prepare and oversee this critical piece of our overall training curriculum.”



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Findlay All Hazards is eager to hear your opinion.

We've created a short survey for readers of this document. Just [follow this link](#) to offer your thoughts. You'll have a chance to register with our database if you would like more information about how Findlay might help you work safer.

And you can contact us through findlayallhazards.com.



ABOUT FINDLAY ALL HAZARDS

The All Hazards Training Center at The University of Findlay is the industry leader in development and delivery of enterprise-wide custom safety and security training.

Since 1986, Findlay All Hazards has taught nearly 200,000 professionals in a wide range of safety, security, and environmental management workshops, and our list of course offerings grows each year.

Findlay All Hazards regularly trains more than 11,000 people per year. Findlay instructors can be found at about 300 different locations in the US and abroad annually, as we present nearly 500 different class sessions. That means an average of about 50 people learn from Findlay All Hazards each and every weekday.

It's not "off the shelf" training, either. Findlay All Hazards programs are custom-made for the client's individual needs, and can be held at almost any location. Customized training courses, conducted at the client's location, make up 90% of Findlay's courses deliveries. No other training provider in North America can make this claim.

Whether you're in the private or public sectors, Findlay is ready to create a training plan for your organization in these arenas and many more:

- OSHA Safety
- Emergency Management
- Emergency Response and HAZWOPER
- Environmental and HAZMAT
- School Safety and Security
- Maritime Security
- Workplace Violence Prevention

ARE YOU PREPARED?



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