

Company D

Category: Distributor members, with operational sites, RC Award

It's often said that a disaster can bring people closer, it's often termed the "Dunkirk Spirit" and were proud to say that it still exists. The Cambridge Dictionary gives the definition as "willingness by a group of people who are in a bad situation to all help each other." Let me tell you about how it has helped to drive continual improvement within our business.

One night in May 2018, at approx. 1:30am, there was a process upset at a neighbouring site, a waste operator. Their process experienced a runaway reaction and lots of heat was generated in amongst a pile of combustible waste material. This led to ignition and the fire spread swiftly and as it was very close to our boundary fence, quickly spread to some of our stock stored close to the fence. The fire service were quickly mobilised and attended the fire with a number of fire engines to the scene and 35 firefighters worked throughout the night to contain and extinguish what they described as a large and well developed fire. Due to access issues the fire service were using our yard to fight the fire on the neighbouring site. The last appliance left site around 9:30am.

Later that week, representatives from the affected site attended site to view our CCTV cameras. While they were on site we took the opportunity to speak to them. They apologised for the incident and told us the plans that were in place to upgrade their site. They have erected a fire wall and adding impermeable barrier to stop water leaving their site and other improvement initiatives. We suggested that we held regular, bi-monthly meetings with us so that we can both be 'better neighbours'.

Since the initial meeting we have had three meetings and have invited other local businesses and the fire service to attend. We have used our grounding from the CBA and the eight RC guiding principles to drive improvements with us and other interested parties. Some of our achievements are:

Improved sharing of information and communication among neighbouring businesses. We have contact details for key people within neighbouring organisations and can quickly disseminate information. For example, the road into our estate was closed for emergency repairs, we were able to let our neighbours know as soon as it was closed so they could make alternative arrangements for deliveries.

Enhanced cooperation among neighbouring businesses who look out for each other. For example, we requested a noisy piece of equipment close to a boundary fence to be taken out of service to protect the welfare of our employees; this was agreed. We have assisted with parking and traffic flow issues on the estate; the access road to site was damaged due to effects of bad weather and heavy goods vehicles, we wrote to the owners of the road to put pressure on them to undertake a suitable long-term repair, the road has been repaired this month and will be suitable for the winter again. A defibrillator has been installed within our site and neighbours have been made aware of its presence; we have eight first aiders on site that have all been trained to use the defibrillator in an emergency.

Meaningful links have been forged with the Fire Service, they have a better understanding of our businesses, how we are laid out and how we can help them gain extra water to fight a fire if they experience a loss of services. For example a conversion valve that allows the Fire Brigade to connect to our valves has been sourced so they can access tons of water from our site. The location of emergency response information for all sites has been highlighted to assist if there is a fire again.

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Links have been forged with the local authority, this has ensured that Giant Hogweed that effects all our sites has been tackled. Fly tipping on the estate has been reported to the Council by us and has been removed.

The meetings have seen value added to all of our operations they are set to continue bi-monthly throughout 2019 and beyond. We have learned more about our neighbours businesses and how we can help each other to remain legally compliant, protect the environment and drive continual improvement for us and our neighbours. We just need to decide who's bringing the biscuits....

As well as the enhancements described above, the following improvements have been made throughout 2018:

We have improved our management systems. We have transitioned our ISO 9001 and 14001 certificates, with BSI, to the new 2015 versions. During the transitions we have taken the opportunity to increase the integration of our management systems throughout the business. Following our transition to the new standards, our processes are more aligned, this is allowing us to reduce risk and focus on opportunities. This is an improvement that will help us embrace the new ISO 45001 health and safety standard next year.

The Sales team have received training and information about the Code of Conduct and reasons why some chemicals are restricted. We have highlighted chemicals that are included on the Code of Conduct and added extra controls onto sales of these products. Any sale to a customer without an account has to be approved by QHSE before the sale is processed, there is a 'bar' on the stock management and order processing software that can only be over-ridden by log-ins with specific permissions.

Environmental improvements have been made. Sampling points that are used to monitor contamination in a stream under our site have become more difficult to access over the years. Overgrown vegetation has been removed, fences and steps have been repaired to make access safer.

Site security has improved. We have employed security staff at our site entrance, their role is to marshal vehicles on and off the site, issuing and receipt of paperwork to and from drivers, ensuring all workers & visitors sign in & out of the site. The CCTV has been upgraded to record higher quality images. Shared fences that were damaged in the fire have been repaired.