

# Route 66 Safety Program

## Statement of Program Practice and Results

Getting “your kicks on Route 66” may not seem to have much to do with Iowa, but it has everything to do with the safety program in Facilities Management at The University of Iowa (UI).

Facilities Management is comprised of approximately 650 staff members who coordinate planning, manage design and construction, maintain and clean the buildings and the grounds, and provide utilities and energy management. Safety was on a slow road to improvement before a diverse team developed the safety program “Route 66” as a way to achieve goals related to safety systems, map progress, and recognize work teams along the route to safer work practices.



In January of 2006, Facilities Management added a new safety program, Route 66, to its safety systems approach. The journey helped Facilities Management staff reach goals of reducing injuries by building safe practices into standard work practices. Driven by goals and a scorecard, work teams received points that would allow them to travel to various checkpoints. The checkpoints helped everyone visualize where the teams were along the route. The results showed that staff completed 95.1% of required safety training in 2006 compared with 67-78% in previous years, and reduced OSHA recordable injuries by 33%.

## **Institutional Benefits**

In 2004, the University of Iowa was grappling with a higher-than-industry-average rate for OSHA recordable injuries, lost time from work, and worker's compensation and disability claims in Facilities Management. Staff were not engaging in, nor committing to, regular safety practices. Training seemed disconnected to consistent practices.

To address concerns, Facilities Management launched a strategic and comprehensive safety initiative, Systems of Safety, to build awareness and identify compliance issues, note program deficiencies, and put new processes in place for safety. Facilities Management then actively sought a way to make safety a number one priority, to reduce risk of injury and lost time, to increase personal responsibility and to create a safe work environment.

A diverse team brainstormed a way to increase interest in and attention to safety throughout the organization. The team members, including custodial, maintenance, and utilities staff, human resources representatives, management, and local union representatives, came up with an idea for a new safety program, Route 66, to change the way Facilities Management staff think about working safely. Route 66 was a way to recognize and reward embedding safety into every day work practices.

This new approach to safety was put into place in January 2006 and would prove to highlight the many differences between a safety program that is compliant and a compliant safety program that also breeds commitment. Route 66 also provided a way to set easy-to-define goals, collect safety data, and document progress across a large organization.

Some of the noteworthy outcomes and associated benefits:

- In previous years, 67-78% of required safety training was completed. In 2006, 95.1% of required safety training was completed.
- OSHA recordable injuries decreased 33%.
- The number of lost work days was reduced by 28%.
- In addition, Route 66 linked health and safety. The program offered incentives to receive a flu vaccine.<sup>1</sup> Flu vaccination numbers in Facilities Management jumped and provided a cost savings to the University of \$4,331.

Donna Percy, director of UI Risk Management, summed it up this way: "The Route 66 program was designed to improve the health, wellness, and safety of university facility management employees. The program actively involves employees in the prevention of injuries and accidents and promotes a culture of safety. The investigation of accidents and near-misses identifies potential hazards and enables preventive measures to be implemented. Route 66 is designed to provide risk control techniques in support of the University's mission of minimizing and controlling risks."

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<sup>1</sup>The University of Iowa provides free flu vaccines for its employees because of the demonstrated decrease in sick days, hospitalization, and death due to influenza.

## **Characteristics or qualities that make this program or practice different or innovative**

The Facilities Management Route 66 safety program grew out of the need to communicate safety issues, motivate employees with attainable goals, provide lessons learned and offer a vehicle for feedback and ownership. It was determined that the program must encompass a way to recognize employees in order to get them personally engaged. As a result, the program was structured so that work teams earned points for consistent safety practices throughout the year and earned rewards and recognition along the route to safety, "Route 66". Route 66 is the front end of a safety program where partnerships, best practices, individual responsibility and teamwork intersect.

*Partnerships.* A small, diverse team including custodial, maintenance and utilities staff, human resources representatives, management, and local union representatives was formed to develop and promote Route 66. The scorecard is based on information gathered and support offered by the UI College of Public Health, AFSCME International and Local, Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Consultation and Education (IOSHA), UI Wellness, UI Health Protection Office, and UI Risk Management.

An on-line, interactive map was created by Facilities Management Information Technology to allow staff to measure their progress along Route 66, check for remaining safety training requirements and, at the same time, learn interesting facts about historic Route 66.<sup>2</sup>

- A video of Route 66 was created and presented to all groups and made available on the intranet safety page.<sup>3</sup>
- A web page with scoring information, Route 66 map, and video was accessible by Facilities Management staff.

*Best practices.* Best practices of Iowa corporations were reviewed and modeled. The Route 66 safety program was inspired by a safety spreadsheet General Electric designed to track their employee's safety performance. Facilities Management took that basic model of tracking metrics and added to it the ideas of ownership and recognition. Facilities Management wanted safety to be a part of how staff members process work daily, not simply a manual or optional "add-on" activity.

*Individual Responsibility.* The program counted individual activities toward team goals. Point values were calculated by relative importance to the safety program; therefore, some items were assigned more points. The unit moved down the road as points accumulated.

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<sup>2</sup><http://intranet.facilities.uiowa.edu/safety/route66roadtrip.asp> (Note: this is a password protected site. Please use the following login: username = iowa\fm-guest50 and the password = route66)

<sup>3</sup> <http://intranet.facilities.uiowa.edu/safety/route66show.pps> (Note: this is a password protected site. Please use the following login: username = fm-guest50 and the password = route66)

*Teamwork.* The Route 66 scorecard recorded safety best practices for individual teams such as safety training, wellness, incident investigation, hazard observation, and communication. The categories and point system were chosen to ensure staff members were rewarded for what they were doing right. The scorecard was kept up-to-date by designated persons in each unit. The program was structured as a year-long journey, the road to safe work practices, driving away from the past toward the future.

**How this practice can be used by others**

Route 66 is a way to communicate, measure and report progress toward a safer workplace.

*Communicating is essential.* To roll this program out and sustain it, Facilities Management used posters on bulletin boards, presentations (Go - To team members made presentations during monthly safety meetings.<sup>4</sup> Monthly safety talks included information and progress on Route 66. Safety tailgate meetings included updates on Route 66.<sup>5</sup>), and posts and articles on the intranet site. Recognition with a celebration and pie at the mid-point provided a time to reflect on accomplishments for each of the work teams.

*Measuring what is meaningful.* Route 66 is a highly visible part of a comprehensive safety program. Establishing those elements that are important to the organization, the institution and what has been important to other best practice organizations leads to the design of the scorecard.

Route 66 Scorecard					
Systems of Safety	Safety Training	Wellness	Incident Investigation	Hazard Observation	Communication
All staff are trained in Systems of Safety	All staff complete their annual required safety training	All units have both Healthwise Books available in their area and have completed the QUIZ	An Incident Investigation Kit is fully stocked	Hazard Observation Checklist is developed	A Safety Center is located in the area
Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete
Monthly safety talks are held with all staff in the area	FREE GAS Every month after all staff have completed required	Wellness Features are scheduled quarterly	Any and all recordable injuries and near misses are investigated *	Checklist is used monthly	Safety Practices Roadmap is posted and reviewed with staff monthly

<sup>4</sup> Go-To Teams are made up of line workers and supervisors from all over Facilities Management. These workers have been trained in the systems approach and in incident investigation

<sup>5</sup>Safety tailgate meetings are brief work area meetings held to communicate a specific and topical safety issue.

	safety training				
Not Complete In Progress Complete					

*Reporting progress.* Progress reports offer participants feedback on how they are doing and recognize achievement. Facilities Management sweetened this recognition by budgeting approximately \$1500, covering various types of pie and ice cream for teams who reached the Mid-Point Café in Adrian, Texas, and a special celebration planned at the end to recognize the teams who made it through to Los Angeles, California.

With the tailoring of the scorecard, safety practices and rewards there are numerous design options for other institutions.

### **Demonstration of management involvement and employee commitment**

The concept of Route 66 was channeled through the management level of the organization to gain approval and support, and to aid in the communication process. The Route 66 committee presented the program to directors, managers, and staff and worked with them to develop their role in the program.

- Nearly 100% of Facilities Management staff participated in Route 66, and of that group 78% completed the entire journey, which required meeting 12 safety practices.
- All but five areas accumulated 85+ points to make it to the end point on the Route 66 roadmap (see Appendix B).
- In previous years, 67-78% of required safety training was completed. In 2006, 95.1% of required safety training was completed.
- Employees are more readily reporting safety hazards in their shop areas.
- Staff now bring examples of recognition-worthy actions by fellow staff members to the attention of management.
- The quarterly wellness sessions were scheduled more regularly, and attendance was up at the sessions. In 2006, the average number of Facilities Management employees reached was 355 per talk; in 2005, it was 296 per talk. Megan Moeller, UI Wellness Coordinator, states, "There was a noticeable shift in the degree to which area leaders took a proactive approach in scheduling Quarterly Wellness Features after the launch of the Route 66 initiative. Prior to the program, I found myself giving lots of prompts to schedule a shop talk. Once areas could earn points by ensuring that I visited on a quarterly basis, I could hardly keep up with the demand!"
- Hazard assessment checklists are now being refreshed and reviewed on a monthly basis.

Many Facilities Management staff members attested to the fact that this program contributed to their personal safety and the safety of their co-workers. Dianna Chance, Custodian, wrote, "Thinking about Route 66 reminded us to be cautious in

our work environment and to remind each other to be safe.” Sandy Conrad, custodial group leader, says, “The crew feels that they have become more aware of safety issues and practices and feels the Route 66 program was very informative and helpful. We have the safety bulletins posted and they are read frequently.”

The culture towards safety made significant improvements. Joe Brinson, Safety Coordinator, says, “Many people who previously looked at safety as something someone else was responsible for have now embraced the idea that their safety is their responsibility. In addition, managers and supervisors are more willing to help make Facilities Management a safer place to work.”

**Documentation of results, analysis, customer feedback, and resulting benchmarks.**

Communication before the launch was essential. Everyone in the organization needs to understand the goals and benefits of a safety program like this one to make it successful. Moreover, communication needs to continue throughout the journey. Facilities Management was able to recognize accomplishments along the journey via intranet “Today’s News” and “Headlines” features along with the Safety and Route 66 web pages. This way of communicating Route 66 was successful because every Facilities Management staff member has access to computers and is provided with training.

When dealing with multi-unit organizations like Facilities Management, there are differences that need to be taken into account. The safety culture in some individual units could be more advanced than in others. Some areas may need more encouragement and training, whereas other units will be self-motivated. In that same vein, the goals of the program need to be tailored to the specific work area.

In Facilities Management’s Utilities & Energy Management, the number of OSHA recordable injuries for 2006 was reduced by approximately fifty percent and three of the six facilities reported zero recordable injuries and zero lost work days during 2006. The Utilities plants led the Facilities Management organization in key safety indicators, as well as performance in Route 66.

**University of Iowa Facilities Management Safety Data Before and After Route 66.**



Date	OSHA Recordable Injuries	OSHA Recordable Injuries Per 100 Employees	Lost Work Days	First Reports of Injury	First Reports of Injury Investigated	Near Miss Incidents
2004	92	13.8	959	182	11	5
2005	73	11.4	1063	152	105	13
2006	49	7.6	764	134	124	23

With the ability to tailor the scorecard, safety practices, and rewards, UI Facilities Management will use this program again with simple modifications to the theme, rewards, and recognition. Tailoring also provides design options for other institutions that want to help work groups review their successes and accomplishments, as well as recognize their challenges and areas for improvements, on their journeys to a safer workplace.