

## **Outsourcing Hazardous Materials & Hazardous Waste Support**

### **DOES IT DIMINISH THE EH&S ROLE IN JCAHO'S ENVIRONMENT OF CARE STANDARDS?**

EH&S professionals are constantly being tugged in multiple directions. Inspections, training, fire drills, disaster drills, workplace complaints, meetings, emails, phone calls, new MSDS's, hazardous waste shipments, and the accompanying documentation to maintain compliance with OSHA, EPA, fire regulations and JCAHO accreditation standards.

Organizations are responsible and accountable for achieving it all, while remaining abreast of constant changes and budget limitations. The demands and restraints transcend small and large healthcare facilities.

Companies wonder how they can maintain chemical inventories accurately and provide MSDS access to all worksites, conduct training, ensure a responsible waste hauler is on contract as well as a response firm for spills. Safety employees spend eight or more hours per week on hazardous material and waste issues, compounded by their relation to the emergency management issues of JCAHO.

Companies may have already initiated outsourcing for the facility's Statement of Condition (SOC) in maintaining JCAHO's Life Safety Management Standard. This allows time to focus on those disciplines, and for preventing or correcting SOC deficiencies. Some organizations use an environmental engineer to monitor air emissions, allowing them to focus on the facility functions that generate air emissions.

Consider 24/7 availability of MSDS's for any and all facility staff without having to photocopy new MSDS's and inserting them in multiple or hundreds of worksite binders. Would that diminish your role as an EH&S professional or enable you to achieve your need of available accurate information and be responsive to inquiries? A hazardous material spill occurs requiring emergency response from a spill clean up firm. How do you know they are reputable and will not create liabilities? Collecting hazardous wastes from worksites and transporting them to a central collection and storage site at your facility is time consuming, and you turn the dog-eared pages of your reference material for storage compatibilities and labeling requirements, not to mention PPE needs and safeguards for pouring-off some wastes into collection containers. Outsource the task? Maybe. But how do you determine who provides reliable and reputable service?

Training expectations have been approached from many angles. There are a myriad of topics and subjects that EH&S staff is responsible for making sure the facility staff knows and understands. Focused topics or general information, EH&S reaches out through education fairs, classroom delivery, videotapes, computer programs and maybe

Internet training. Even when your facility education department assists you in achieving the EH&S training requirements, your role is not diminished; it permits you to oversee and track material and performance. Challenging as all of this can be, imagine if there was a 24-7-365 resource to support all of these activities.

Today's healthcare EH&S strategy needs to include time for investigating means and developing procedures to comply with EPA's H2E initiatives in reducing specific types and quantities of hazardous materials that are predominant within their facilities. Meanwhile, there are thousands of hazardous materials that will remain a fundamental component of facilities management, environmental services, communications, medical support services, and in direct patient care delivery (i.e. antineoplastics), just to name a few. Instead of continuing to delve into the intricacies of hazardous material compliance, many in the healthcare industry are following the actions of major retailers, entertainment and hospitality companies, transportation and shipping companies, among others, by turning to outsourcing experts.

EH&S outsourcers help their customers effectively comply with hazardous material and waste laws to achieve compliance with OSHA and EPA regulations, and in the case of healthcare, maintain compliance with CMS criteria and the accreditation standards of JCAHO, CAP, and CARF.

Outsourcing companies can provide immediate access to product specific MSDS's for healthcare staff, enabling EH&S staff to maintain a hardcopy set of MSDS's in the EH&S office, and the emergency department (in hospital occupancies). Outsourcing companies obtain and electronically file a manufacturer's MSDS corresponding to a facility's chemical inventory.

Outsourcing companies can enable EH&S to immediately access the information by Internet or telephone and subsequent receipt of facsimile information. Environmental specialists are well educated in the management of hazardous materials and response actions to provide you guidance. They can initiate notifications, and can provide you with reputable, credentialed emergency response hazardous material clean up firms in your area. They are available to answer questions about what to do with a damaged product.

When it comes to transporting and shipping hazardous materials, outsourcing organizations can assist healthcare facilities in making sure air and ground shipments are properly packaged, and that labeling and shipping papers are used and administered appropriately.

Communication with local authorities of hazardous materials at healthcare facilities and satellite locations is critical. Outsourcers, who are familiar with federal, state and local regulations, use sophisticated tools to track reporting requirements for customers, ensuring compliance. No more worrying about what's due, when it's due, where it's due and paying fees. The healthcare EH&S staff can contend with other pressing issues while knowing their compliance requirements are being met.

## **Significant Cost Savings**

Outsourcing companies like 3E Company have developed services to effectively manage the burdens of hazardous material compliance requirements. Providing consolidated compliance services enables healthcare facilities to keep costs at a minimum, and enables healthcare facilities to provide hazardous material and hazardous waste oversight without compromising the time and attention needs of other JCAHO Environment of Care responsibilities. This creates a win, win for management, EH&S personnel, healthcare staff, regulatory compliance and accreditation.

Consider the collective work hours associated with the hazardous material and waste management program, and collective budget expenditures in maintaining these materials, clean-ups, and disposal, and then, compare them with the services provided by outsourcing companies like 3E. The numbers will reflect the opportunity to achieve annual financial savings and effective program time management by outsourcing these functions. Just make sure that whoever you outsource these critical functions to has a proven track record of understanding and being responsive to their client's needs, an extensive and reputable client base and expertise in the healthcare industry.

The business of providing healthcare is complicated. Contending with hazardous materials and waste does not need to be one of the complications. Instead, outsourcing companies like 3E can help EH&S staff and hospitals effectively comply with regulations and accreditation standards to assure compliance, risk minimization, and the safety of patients, visitors, staff and the environment.