

## Southwire's Kentucky Plant Sees Reduction in WMSDs with RAPID Team Events®



Founded in 1950, Southwire Company, LLC is one of the world's leading producers of wire and cable used to transmit power and is the nation's largest building wire manufacturer. The company employs over 7,000 people among 45 facilities. In 2012, employee sprains and strains led the company to take a more in-depth look at making ergonomic improvements in the workplace. While some progress had been made, the process was fairly informal and slow-moving.

In early 2013, Southwire enlisted VelocityEHS to facilitate a series of RAPID Team Events—multi-day, multi-disciplinary events focusing on making quick, simple, and visible changes to improve ergonomics in the workplace. The Hawesville, Kentucky facility, which manufactures aluminum rod and cable, was the first of 17 facilities to host an event. Site Safety Manager, Ryan Goad, explains "We didn't succeed at first, because we had different safety teams trying to focus on so many different things. We needed a dedicated, focused ergonomics team."

During the RAPID Team Event, five different operations were assessed, resulting in 30 identified issues and 24 completed fixes. "The great thing about it," says Goad, "was that we saw immediate results. I knew we had something pretty special when I saw other operators coming up to our team to make suggestions and get involved." Goad notes that major accomplishments since the event have been the weight reduction in tools, parts, and equipment, and the implementation of a new lifting policy. In one job, a pneumatic nailer replaced manual hammering. Another fix, the drawing machine wire slider, was a finalist in the company's 2013 Find It- Fix It Challenge™.

The Southwire plant maintains momentum for continuous improvement through a process called "OPS Rounds." Goad explains, "We assign a small group of plant-floor employees to a team for 12 weeks. Their sole focus is to work on one aspect of production, such as PPE, root cause analysis, or

ergonomics." All of the teams are trained in ergonomics and Goad notes that many of their projects overlap, which is a good thing. "One team may be working on the reduction of scrap, and the next thing you know, they are working with the ergonomics team on a project. It's really neat to see the groups working together."

By 2014, the plant experienced a 30% reduction in strains and sprains and almost a 40% reduction in back injuries. Over 100 ergonomic improvements have been implemented, with another 40 in process. Goad says that the site plans to continue its ergonomics rounds with a focus on reducing awkward reaches and further reducing tool and equipment weight. Here are some of his key learnings (link).

### Key Learnings from Ryan Goad:

**KEEP IT FOCUSED:** "When you have a group looking at ergonomics for eight hours a day, twelve weeks in a row, you're bound to see success."

**ENGAGE EMPLOYEES:** "If you give employees the ownership, the training, and the resources to make the fixes, they won't let you down. After all, they are the ones who have to do these jobs, day in and day out."

**GET MANAGEMENT INVOLVED:** "Our OPS Round groups present to management each week. Our plant manager has been ecstatic about the fixes we've made and really sees the value."

**MEASURE IT:** "The company's BRIEF™ Survey and BEST™ assessment forms had a huge impact on us. We were able to measure our improvements. I really like how we use them at our facility."

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