

Carhartt Reduced OSHA Recordables by over 50% through Ergonomics & Engagement



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Scott Harper
U.S. Safety Manager
Carhartt



Ashley Arvin
Safety Specialist
Carhartt

Working Hard for Long-Term Safety

Founded in 1889 and headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan, Carhartt is an American apparel company specializing in heavy-duty work wear. It's a worldwide operation with over 3,000 associates and four stitching, sewing, and finishing manufacturing facilities in the United States, located in Kentucky and Tennessee, where 1,200 associates are hard at work.

Taking a proactive stance toward workplace safety, Scott Harper, U.S. Safety Manager, and Ashley Arvin, Safety Specialist, knew they could implement improvements to reduce injuries due to repetitive movements in their facilities. Poor postures, high forces, and repetitive stress can increase the risk of associates developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), but that risk can be effectively assessed and reduced with an ergonomics process.

Engaging Leadership to Associates

Knowing an ergonomics program would benefit the associates across Carhartt's manufacturing facilities, Scott and Ashley went to work consulting with leadership and associates to better understand where opportunities for improvements existed.

Since ergonomics was new to both Scott and Ashley, it was important to find a system that could help educate

and train them, the ergonomics committee, as well as all their associates. Ashley explains, "We looked at a couple different industrial ergonomics software platforms, but none of them really had training and educational components as well thought out and detailed as VelocityEHS Industrial Ergonomics. Plus, the AI-driven assessments capability was something we hadn't seen before, and we wanted to lean into this technology to further advance our practices and safety program."

While the training and the AI-driven assessments checked two of the boxes, Scott added, "We also have the expert support we need with Velocity. We knew the ergonomics program would be a success because Velocity wasn't going to let us fail."

There were some initial concerns about the adoption of the ergonomics program. Scott continued, "We thought getting engagement and involvement from our associates would be a little challenging, but once we got the ergonomics program started and they were seeing the success of it, they then began coming up with improvements."

Ashley elaborates, "We really engaged our leadership team, getting buy-in from all different departments including our Senior VP of HR. Next, we communicated with our associates about what each step of our plan entailed. We emphasized the importance of their input, opinions, and ideas. They are the true experts and can give the best insight into how to improve their workstations. We want their voices to be heard."

Building a Long-Term Ergonomics Program while Reducing Costs

A successful ergonomics process takes a good strategy and teamwork. Scott and Ashley decided the best way to succeed



with the ergonomics program was to roll the new program out one facility at a time. The first ergonomics program began with their Irvine facility in 2022, next the Camden facility in 2023, followed by the Edmonton facility starting this year in 2024.

Within each facility, they assembled on-site ergonomics committees consisting of leadership, engineers, mechanics, and other key decision-makers. Then the committee went through the software training and began performing MSD risk assessments. After recording videos for MSD risk assessments with their mobile devices, the committee would reconvene and go over assessment results. They would brainstorm what could be done to help each associate at their workstation.

As Ashley puts it, "One of our goals was to truly figure out how to help each associate. I think the biggest thing we did was choose the right people to be on the committee. We have leaders who can influence, engineers who can then make changes to the process, and mechanics who can get those changes into place. We don't have to wait, and our associates get to see the improvements happen quickly."

Scott added, "The other thing that impressed me was the color coding of risk areas, showing high-risk movements as red, medium-risk movements as yellow, and low-risk movements as green. It helps with the job improvement process to see where improvements should be made, getting those improvements in place, then going back out to record and see if these improvements reduced the risk for our associates. Being able to immediately see a high-risk movement reduced to a low-risk movement was rewarding."

Utilizing the Velocity risk scoring system (where above 50 is extremely high-risk, 30–49 high-risk, 20–29 moderate-risk, and below 20 is low-risk), Scott, Ashley, and their teams were able to take multiple jobs that fell into the 30–49 range and reduce their risk scores into the teens.

For a job pushing very heavy carts, Ashley explains, "We did an assessment, and the risk score came out to be 34, which is one of our highest risk positions. We talked with the associates to figure out a solution. A motorized pallet jack helped us lower the risk score to 13. The cost of the pallet jack was minimal, and the reduction of risk to our associates was priceless."

Scott added, "Through this program we have found that we can make successful improvements without a lot of expenditure. It might be as simple as removing a shelf that had always been there, for whatever reason, which caused a higher risk score because our associate was having to move around it."

Results and Future Aspirations

When Scott and Ashley set out to implement an ergonomics program throughout Carhartt's facilities, their goals were to reduce MSD risks for their associates, decrease OSHA recordable injuries, and improve associate engagement to boost morale and strengthen their safety culture. The program has been introduced into three facilities with amazing results:

- Irvine, KY Facility—16 total OSHA claims in 2021, reduced to 8 in 2022 (50% reduction)
- Camden, TN Facility—27 total OSHA claims in 2022, reduced to 11 in 2023 (59% reduction)
- Edmonton, KY Facility—two months into the program, they have gone 50 days without an OSHA recordable injury, a new facility record.

Ashley also pointed out, "We can really see a difference with our newer associates because we're making sure they're getting what they need right from the start. It's cultivated a sense of caring from day one. It's truly important for us that all our associates know we care about them, their wellbeing, and that they are comfortable here at work."

Scott added, "Since we've implemented [VelocityEHS Industrial Ergonomics](#), it has not only helped with engagement but has improved overall morale at each facility, also boosting workplace health, safety, and wellbeing. It's been impressive seeing the improvements as the program progresses. We've rolled it out in three facilities and have plans for two more in the coming year. Our goal is to get a long-term, sustainable ergonomics program in place and use it to benefit our associates."



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