



Case Study

Safety Reports Provides Strong Foundation for Iowa County's Growing Safety Program

 **SAFETY REPORTS**

Overview

Located in central Iowa, Tama County is a rural county with about 17,000 residents spread across 721 square miles. After an employee incident resulted in OSHA involvement, the county decided to shore up its safety efforts by hiring a full-time employee to oversee them. Prior to that time, county safety efforts were piecemeal in nature due to limited in-house knowledge and resources.

Tama County Safety Director Garrison Reekers spent three decades in military and civilian law enforcement before launching a second career in workplace safety. In his new role, Garrison oversees the safety program for all 120 county employees, performs inspections of county buildings and workplaces, and conducts safety training on a variety of topics. Faced with significant challenges as he built a holistic county safety program from the ground up, Garrison turned to Safety Reports by ToolWatch to help him overcome these hurdles.

Challenge #1: Creating a Comprehensive Safety Program from Scratch

As the county's first full-time safety director, Garrison was responsible for developing a comprehensive safety program from the ground up, a task made harder by the fact that he had no background in workplace safety besides an OSHA 10-hour general industry training course. His learning curve was steep: "When I first started, it was a trial by fire. I didn't even have my OSHA 1910 or 1926 industry standards books. I thought public safety is safety, same thing. Not even close."

Plus, the county's pre-existing safety program was minimal. Prior to Garrison, the program had been overseen by a safety committee headed by the county human resources manager. Documentation consisted of paper forms created by an old insurance company. As he dove in, Garrison found the forms included content that was not applicable to county facilities, incorrect and/or outdated codes, and even codes for other countries.

Challenge #2: Finding Reliable Safety Resources in Budget

After starting in January 2022, Garrison quickly realized that, given his limited background in workplace safety, he could benefit from a reliable tool that would guide him through the inspections process, point him to applicable codes so he could learn more, and help him create professional inspection reports. Since Garrison was the county's first safety employee, a safety budget did not exist at his time of hire, and the county budget for the fiscal year had already been approved.

Solution: Safety Reports Plays Vital Role in Revamped Safety Program

Garrison implemented Safety Reports just a month after starting his new position. His first priority was using the [Inspections app](#) to help him complete inspections of county buildings as well as ten outlying maintenance sheds used by road crews.

Streamlined Inspections Process

Safety Reports' ease of use meant that it required minimal start-up time since the Inspections app walked him through the process step by step. Being able to perform inspections using a cell phone – even in county buildings with poor cellular service – proved much more efficient than the paper forms used previously.

Clear OSHA Codes

The inclusion of simplified OSHA codes in the Inspections app helped Garrison quickly supplement his knowledge of applicable safety regulations. Clicking on an inspection item led to OSHA codes explained in plain English, which could then be used as a starting point to find additional information in reference books or on the OSHA website.

Actionable Inspection Reports

Safety at county worksites was positively impacted by the ability to generate thorough and timely inspection reports. For example, Garrison and the county's two maintenance foremen used his reports to identify "low-hanging fruit," or items that were simple to rectify, and prioritized those corrective actions. The foremen appreciated that they could view inspection reports on their cell phones instead of having to print out hard copies. And, as he has gotten more familiar with the Inspections app, Garrison can create inspections reports on site right from his phone.

Comprehensive Analytics and Reporting

Garrison is continuing to explore the analytics and reporting capabilities offered by Safety Reports. He can quickly access and print off key statistics from the Safety Reports dashboard to update the Tama County Board of Supervisors on the safety

"Overall, Safety Reports has been a key component of what I have been able to do as Tama County Safety Director," said Garrison. "I had no knowledge base, no background in safety at all, and Safety Reports just made it so easy."

program's progress, including an annual written report outlining the number of inspections performed and their findings. Garrison likes how easy it is to generate professional reports that provide the basis for talking points when interacting with the Board.

The Future: Going Beyond Inspections

Garrison has been pleased to discover that his Safety Reports subscription gets him access to much more than the Inspections app. He already sees ways that he could use the Observations and Scan apps to enhance Tama County's safety program.

One challenge Garrison has faced is getting county employees to view him as an ally instead of the OSHA cop and report potential safety issues to him. To make reporting as easy as possible, Garrison plans to introduce the Safety Reports [Observations app](#) so that employees can report positive and negative observations, anonymously if they choose, using their cell phones. Training has been scheduled with country road crews, which he hopes will have a positive impact.

Additionally, Garrison has started experimenting with the [Scan app](#) to inspect and manage county safety equipment like fire extinguishers and first aid kits. The county had an existing program for this purpose that was difficult to use, had limited licenses and required special equipment like a handheld scanner. Using the Scan app, Garrison has been able to quickly make a custom form and is ordering labels to create QR codes to tag each item.

Garrison encourages other people considering Safety Reports to take the plunge: "For those looking at Safety Reports, I'd say go for it. I looked at a lot of other options, and Safety Reports offers a total program at an outstanding value. I started with the Inspections app and now have all these other apps for the same price."

Conclusion

Safety Reports has played an important part in helping Garrison Reekers develop a comprehensive safety program for Tama County, Iowa. As a result, the county has been able to digitize both safety inspections and the ensuing reports, allowing county employees to easily reference applicable codes and quickly take corrective action when necessary. Going forward, Tama County's safety director plans to leverage Safety Reports' observation and scan capabilities to further enhance their safety efforts.

To learn more about Safety Reports, [request a demo today](#) and discover how you can upgrade your safety inspections.



About Safety Reports

Safety Reports offers a suite of safety software tools that will empower your workers to improve safety performance and be more engaged in the safety process. Our analytics and dashboards provide visibility that will increase safety, quality, and production across your organization.

Our solutions include: [Inspections](#), Training, JSAs, [Observations](#), Incidents, [Scan](#), and Forms apps, providing you a truly paperless, digitized platform that improves safety performance.

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