Create a Culture of Safety Around Your Loading Dock

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What Do Safe Loading Docks Look Like?

Maintaining a safe loading dock is essential, as both a potential risk center and a bottleneck in the supply chain. There are challenges to making these high-traffic, fast-paced spaces safer, however. Everything passes through the loading dock, and activity in this area is faster than ever in today's automation-heavy companies.

Risk factors on the loading dock could include the following:

- The space may not have been set up correctly when the facility was initially built.
- Equipment could have degraded with time or use or might have always been unsuitable for its usage pattern.
- There may be a failure of training or policies around the loading dock.

Prevention far outweighs reactive repairs in terms of value. We estimate a $5,000 investment in equipment could prevent a potential $1 million insurance settlement or a nearly $200,000 OSHA fine.

Creating a safe, efficient loading dock and warehouse means overcoming these challenges.

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Setting Up Your Loading Dock for Safety and Efficiency

Creating a safe loading dock involves selecting, installing and maintaining suitable equipment to fulfill every requirement. Essential asset categories to account for include:

SAFETY RAILINGS
to lessen the chance of falls from elevation and to segregate pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

LOADING DOCK LEVELERS AND LIFTS
capable of handling appropriate weight requirements.

LOADING DOCK BUMPERS
to help guide drivers to align their vehicles and prevent accidental collisions.

TRAILER RESTRAINTS
to prevent dangers such as trailer tip-overs, trailer creep or separation, or unprepared departures.

HIGH-SPEED DOORS
to enable efficient employee movement and help preserve environmental conditions.

COMMERCIAL DOORS
engineered to handle high traffic and resist extensive wear and tear.

CONTROL PANELS
to automate operations and collect Internet of Things data that helps with predictive analytics.

This equipment should be frequently assessed for its suitability for purpose as well as its present status and overall age. Safety assessments and protocols can both minimize downtime and enhance total cost of ownership.

Keeping the Area Safe and Secure

Possessing suitable and well-maintained loading dock equipment, from trailer restraints and loading dock levelers to commercial doors and beyond, is one step in maintaining safety and security. As a facility operator, you should also take the time to ensure the space is being used correctly. This means:

Periodic inspections will determine whether the loading dock area is operating as intended, for instance with clear lanes for movement and no clutter causing potential impediments for personnel or vehicles.

These inspections must be carried out regularly, with safety concerns documented and tracked over time to protect against recurrence and ensure progress.

In addition to safety, inspections can encompass facility security — ensuring the premises cannot be penetrated by intruders due to open or unlocked doors.

Creating a Safety Culture among Employees

Even beyond the systems in place in your facility, your people are the key to ensuring safety. To be successful, you must foster a safety culture. To get started, consider the answer to this question, "Is safety a priority or core value for our organization?"

Priority: can change instantly, making safety less important on your list.

VS

Core Value: values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions shared by employees.

While **safety compliance** means obeying the letter of the law, **safety culture** involves placing safety alongside business priorities such as budget, sales and service, never making it secondary. It's going further, embracing safety as a core value.

Bringing workers into this culture involves a few steps undertaken by facility management, including:

- **Implement safety policies and procedures** that are clearly posted, comprehensive and tailored to your workplace. Ensure understanding of safety protocols, hazard recognition and proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **Provide adequate training** for operators relevant to their roles on topics such as hazard communication, fall protection, machine guarding, emergency procedures and equipment operation.
- **Provide adequate resources and encourage engagement** with training and tools to maintain a safe work environment. Involve employees in decision-making and encourage ideas for improving safety practices. Recognize and reward them for their commitment to safety.
- **Promote a safety culture** encouraging your workforce to actively participate in safety initiatives. Consider forming safety committees or designate safety representatives. Empower workers to report hazards, near misses and safety concerns without fear of retaliation.

These personnel management priorities, when combined with optimized assets and day-to-day loading dock upkeep, form a pillar of an overall safe and secure work environment.

CASE STUDY

Detecting and Correcting Unsafe Dock Conditions

What does loading dock safety upkeep look like in practice? Art and craft supply retailer Michaels worked with MINER on a SafeCHECK survey of its New Jersey regional distribution center, a facility with 71 dock positions.

The survey revealed:

0

No assets without any evidence of wear.

80

Assets needing replacement within 2-4 years.

4

Assets requiring immediate replacement.

Upon reviewing the survey's findings, management launched a full-scale service and repair campaign for the facility's equipment and immediately contracted for a follow-up project.

In addition to repairing the damaged assets, Michaels' leadership took the opportunity to invest in new equipment, adding:

- High-volume low-speed (HVLS) fans
- Vehicle restraints
- Anti-pest bug screens
- Control panels

The timely survey allowed Michaels to proactively embark on this impactful work, refreshing its dock and door assets rather than suffering the losses associated with an equipment failure.

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Being Proactive To Create Safe Conditions

To bring loading dock safety into the present, automation-heavy workplace, personnel can take advantage of specialized technology. A tracking application used by safety managers, coupled with a structured approach to information collection and use, can enable a culture of safety and security.

This digital tracking method involves:

- Keeping up-to-date data on each asset's suitability for its purpose, age and state of repair
- Updating that information regularly for each loading dock in the facility
- Performing independent assessments of safety factors such as traffic flow, safety barriers and storage

Safety personnel have to be able to both update and access their data on-site for maximum efficiency — this makes a cloud-based system accessible through smart devices the ideal model for loading dock safety tracking.

Through careful monitoring and the comparatively minimal up-front investment in proper equipment maintenance, you can ensure your facilities are safer for workers and avoid costly accidents and downtime.

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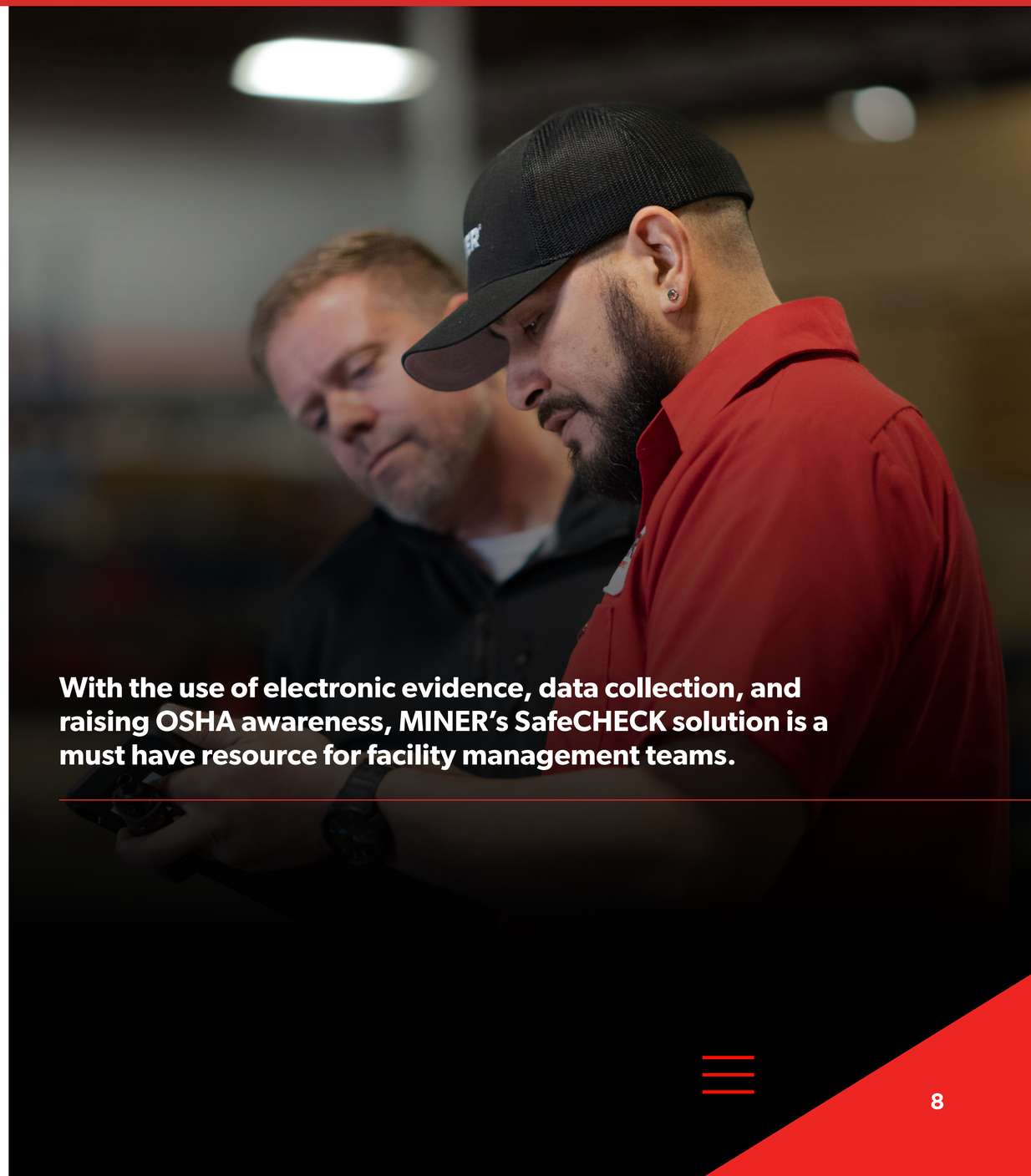
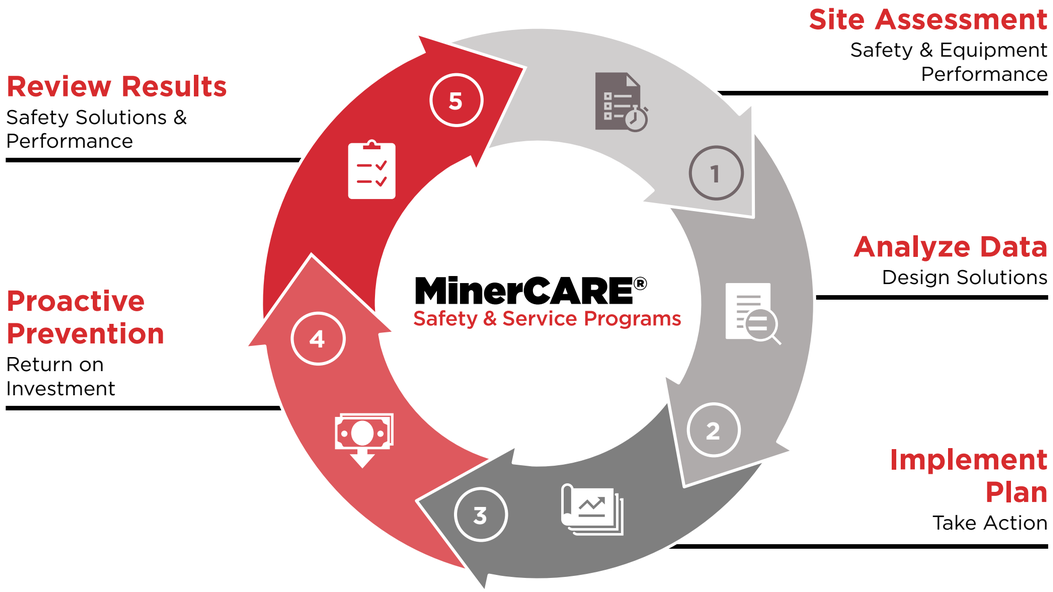


With the use of electronic evidence, data collection, and raising OSHA awareness, MINER's SafeCHECK solution is a must have resource for facility management teams.

OUR SOLUTION



The Value MINER Brings To Your Operations

When it comes to operational efficiency and safety, don't go it alone. Seek guidance from safety professionals, consultants or industry associations to ensure compliance with safety regulations and best practices. Work with stakeholders such as unions and trade organizations to address concerns and promote safety culture.

Working with the facility experts at MINER enables you to create a proactive maintenance strategy that addresses your ROI goals, creating a safe, efficient and clean environment less prone to unplanned downtime. MINER's personnel carry all relevant certifications and travel with the necessary parts and equipment to make timely repairs. With MINER's help, you can:

- Raise safety and security standards for your company and employees, stay on top of warranties, OSHA requirements and proactive maintenance plans.
- Increase your facility uptime and reduce unplanned maintenance by up to 10%, with resulting reductions in repair expenditures, lost productivity and overtime costs.
- Maximize the ROI of each piece of equipment by optimizing its usable life span, plus support budgeting efforts and reduce TCO.

Every company is different, with its own unique equipment setup, business plan and needs. Your experience with MINER will reflect your facilities' requirements and your objectives.

Get Started Today! MinerCARE® Safety and Service Programs help you proactively identify potential problems and ensure every aspect of your facility is running at peak performance. **Visit minercorp.com/minercare to learn more about our SafeACT and SafeCHECK solutions.**

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