

**ROUTE 66 SAFETY PROGRAM**

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**Abstract**

In January of 2006, a new safety program, Route 66, was put into place to change the way the University of Iowa's Facilities Management staff think about working safely. Route 66 provided formal and informal ways for all workers to identify and achieve goals related to safety systems. Facilities Management partnered with the UI College of Public Health, AFSCME International and Local, UI Wellness, UI Health Protection Office, and UI Risk Management.

Teams earned points for consistent safety practices throughout the year and earned rewards and recognition along the virtual route to safety by mapping their progress on a map from Chicago to Los Angeles along historic "Route 66."

The Facilities Management culture of safety made great strides due to the Route 66 program. Many people who previously looked at safety as someone else's responsibility have now taken ownership and pride in their safety and the safety of those around them. Managers and supervisors have renewed their dedication and willingness to help employees make Facilities Management a safer place to work.

## **Introduction to Facilities Management at The University of Iowa**

The University of Iowa is a comprehensive public university committed to high-quality teaching, research, and service. The University of Iowa (UI) campus serves approximately 29,000 students and hosts well over a million visitors who come for healthcare, cultural events, art exhibits, and athletic events and to participate in the many conferences and educational programs scheduled at the University year-round.

Facilities Management (FM) at The University of Iowa is comprised of approximately 650 dedicated staff members who coordinate planning, manage design and construction, maintain and clean the buildings and the grounds, and provide utilities and energy management. The five units of Facilities Management (Business & Facilities Management, Campus & Facilities Planning, Design & Construction Services, Operations & Maintenance, and Utilities & Energy Management) provide services for the general education facilities and utilities for the entire campus.

Facilities Management has adopted a practice of championing innovative projects and processes and recognizing and rewarding innovative efforts. In 2006, Facilities Management was ranked #7 by Buildings magazine for its 2006 standout accomplishments, including a new Campus Master Plan, energy conservation initiatives, safety initiatives, and communications efforts.<sup>1</sup> In 2005, Facilities Management was ranked #10 by the same magazine. Facilities Management was also a 2005 recipient of APPA's Effective & Innovative Practices award for the Biomass Fuel Project – a partnership with Quaker Oats whereby oat hulls are co-fired with coal to save energy and reduce CO2 emissions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.buildings.com/Articles/detailBuildings.asp?ArticleID=3306>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.appa.org/recognition/innovativewinners.cfm>

The success of these forward-thinking initiatives relies heavily on empowered staff and effective partnerships not only within Facilities Management but also with the UI campus and surrounding communities, businesses, and organizations. These strong partnerships make Facilities Management unique among its peer institutions. It is this same culture of innovation, recognition, and strong partnerships that made the Route 66 safety program a celebrated success.

### **Statement of the Problem/Initiative**

In 2004, Facilities Management launched a strategic and comprehensive safety initiative, Systems of Safety. In 2005, Facilities Management continued to work to build awareness and identify compliance issues, note program deficiencies, and put new processes in place for safety. A safety engineer was the



Safety presentation on shop floor.

designated staff member for safety. Training was available, but staff were not engaging in, nor committing to, regular safety practices. If someone got hurt, it was their fault. Under this “individual fault” mentality, the University of Iowa Facilities Management group had a higher-than-industry-average rate for OSHA recordable injuries, lost time from work, and worker’s compensation and disability claims. It was clear that the safety structure needed to change.

Facilities Management actively sought a way to make safety a number one priority, and a way to transition from the old centrally directed safety model to a new personal accountability model. Facilities Management needed an innovative way to

communicate safety issues but also wanted to motivate employees with attainable goals, provide lessons learned, and offer a vehicle for feedback and ownership. It was determined that the program must encompass a way to recognize employees in order to get them personally engaged. As a result, the program was structured as a year-long journey. Work teams earned points for consistent safety practices throughout the year and earned rewards and recognition along the route to safety, Route 66.



In January of 2006, a new safety program, Route 66, was put into place to change the way Facilities Management staff think about working safely. This new approach to safety would prove to highlight the many differences

between a safety program that simply meets compliance and a safety program that meets compliance *and* breeds commitment. Route 66 also provided a way to set easy-to-define goals, collect safety data, and document progress across a large organization.

## **Design**

The Route 66 safety program was inspired by a safety spreadsheet General Electric designed to track their employee's safety performance. Facilities Management took that basic model of tracking metrics and added to it the ideas of ownership and recognition. A version of GE's scorecard based on Facilities Management's needs (see Appendix A) was created, along with a system of rewards and recognition as staff traveled along a virtual Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. Route 66 was designed to embed safety practices in organizational behavior. The Route 66 scorecard recorded practices such as safety training, wellness, incident investigation, hazard observation, and

communication. The categories and point system were chosen to ensure staff members were rewarded for what they were doing right. The scorecard was kept up-to-date by designated persons in each unit.



Route 66 planning committee

A small, diverse team including custodial staff, maintenance staff, human resources representatives, management, and local union representatives was formed to develop and promote Route 66. A considerable amount of work went into gathering information about the historic

and much-traveled Route 66. An on-line, interactive map was created by Facilities Management Information Technology to allow staff to measure their progress along the way, check for remaining safety training requirements and, at the same time, learn interesting facts about historic Route 66.<sup>3</sup>

Funding for the program was approximately \$1500 for rewards and recognition. Various types of pie were provided to teams who reached the Mid-Point Café in Adrian, Texas, and a special celebration planned at the end to recognize those teams who made it through to Los Angeles, California.



<sup>3</sup><http://intranet.facilities.uiowa.edu/safety/route66roadtrip.asp> (Note: this is a password protected site. Please use the following login: username = iowa\fm-guest50 and the password = route66)

## Implementation

The concept of Route 66 was channeled through the management level of the organization to gain approval and support, and to aid in the communication process.



The first Facilities Management group to reach the mid-point, Mid-Point Café, on Route 66.

In order to inform individual units of the new safety program, several communication channels were used:

- The Route 66 committee presented the program to directors, managers, and staff and worked with them to develop their role in the program.
- A video of Route 66 was created and presented to all groups and made available on the intranet safety page.<sup>4</sup>
- A web page with scoring information, Route 66 map, and video was accessible by FM staff.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://intranet.facilities.uiowa.edu/safety/route66show.pps> (Note: this is a password protected site. Please use the following login: username = fm-guest50 and the password = route66)

- Posters about the program and progress were posted in every area on their team bulletin board.
- Go - To team members made presentations during monthly safety meetings.<sup>5</sup>



- Progress and recognition were communicated to staff through Facilities Management's Today's News and Headlines articles on the intranet.
- Monthly safety talks included information and progress on Route 66.
- Safety tailgate meetings included updates on Route 66.<sup>6</sup>

Scorecards tracked twelve safety training requirements for each group (see appendix A). Point values were calculated by relative importance to the safety program; therefore, some items were assigned more points. Recognizing a link between wellness and safety, points were also given to recognize employees who attended the UI Health



Facilities Management staff member receives her flu shot for an extra point at the UI Health Fair.

Fair and received flu vaccines. Additional points were given for those employees who attended the UI Safety Best Practices Conference. The unit moved down the road as points accumulated.

<sup>5</sup> Go-To Teams are made up of line workers and supervisors from all over Facilities Management. These workers have been trained in the systems approach and in incident investigation

<sup>6</sup>Safety tailgate meetings are brief work area meetings held to communicate a specific and topical safety issue.



Pie was delivered to work areas for a recognition celebration after the group reached the Mid-Point Cafe in Adrian, Texas, and for each unit completing the entire Route 66 journey from Chicago to Los Angeles.



### **Benefits**

The Facilities Management organization as a whole, as well as individual employees, benefited in several ways. During the journey, there were some noteworthy outcomes and associated benefits:

- Nearly 100% of Facilities Management staff participated in Route 66, and of that group 78% completed the entire journey, which required 12 safety practices.
- All but five areas accumulated 85+ points to make it to the end point on the Route 66 roadmap (see Appendix B).
- The culture towards safety made significant improvements. Joe Brinson, Safety Coordinator, says, “Many people who previously looked at safety as something someone else was responsible for have now embraced the idea that their safety is their responsibility. In addition, managers and supervisors are more willing to help make Facilities Management a safer place to work.”
- In previous years, 67-78% of required safety training was completed. In 2006, 95.1% of required safety training was completed.
- OSHA recordable injuries decreased 33%. Donna Percy, UI Risk Management, says, “The Route 66 program was designed to improve the health, wellness, and safety of university facility management employees. The program actively

involves employees in the prevention of injuries and accidents and promotes a culture of safety. The investigation of accidents and near-misses identifies potential hazards and enables preventive measures to be implemented. Route 66 is designed to provide risk control techniques in support of the University's mission of minimizing and controlling risks.”

- The number of lost work days was reduced by 28%.
- There was a 76% increase in near-miss incidents reported in 2006, which highlights the focus on *incident prevention*.
- Hazard assessment checklists are now being refreshed and reviewed on a monthly basis.
- Employees are more readily reporting safety hazards in their shop areas, whereas before they weren't as invested.
- Staff now bring examples of recognition-worthy actions by fellow staff members to the attention of management.
- As a special incentive to earn Route 66 points, areas were awarded one point for every two people who received a flu vaccine.<sup>7</sup> As a result, flu vaccination numbers jumped and provided a cost savings to the University of \$4,331 (see Appendix D).



Power Plant Go -To Team members trained in incident investigation.

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<sup>7</sup>The University of Iowa provides free flu vaccines for its employees because of the demonstrated decrease in sick days, hospitalization, and death due to influenza.

- The quarterly wellness sessions were scheduled more regularly, and attendance was up at the sessions. In 2006, the average number of Facilities Management employees reached was 355 per talk; in 2005, it was 296 per talk. Megan Moeller, UI Wellness Coordinator, states, “There was a noticeable shift in the degree to which area leaders took a proactive approach in scheduling Quarterly Wellness Features after the launch of the Route 66 initiative. Prior to the program, I found myself giving lots of prompts to schedule a shop talk. Once areas could earn points by ensuring that I visited on a quarterly basis, I could hardly keep up with the demand!”

Many Facilities Management staff members attested to the fact that this program contributed to their personal safety and the safety of their co-workers. Dianna Chance, Custodian, wrote, “Thinking about Route 66 reminded us to be cautious in our work environment and to remind each other to be safe.” Sandy Conrad, custodial group leader, says, “The crew feels that they have become more aware of safety issues and practices and feels the Route 66 program was very informative and helpful. We have the safety bulletins posted and they are read frequently.”



A custodial group celebrates their arrival at the Mid-Point Café with pie on the terrace.

## Retrospect

For a program like Route 66 to be successful, it is imperative that managers are on-board early in the process so that they can motivate and encourage employees to participate.

Communication before the launch is essential. Everyone in the organization needs to understand the goals and benefits. Moreover, communication needs to continue



A unit arriving at the mid-point gets ready to receive their award for safe practices.

throughout the journey. Facilities Management was able to recognize accomplishments along the journey via intranet “Today’s News” and “Headlines” features along with the Safety and Route 66 web pages. This way of communicating Route 66 was successful because every Facilities Management staff member has access to computers and is provided with

training.

When dealing with multi-unit organizations like Facilities Management, there are differences that need to be taken into account. The safety culture in some individual units could be more advanced than in others. Some areas may need more encouragement and training, whereas other units will be self-motivated. In that same vein, the goals of the program need to be tailored to the specific work area.

With the ability to tailor the scorecard, safety practices, and rewards, UI Facilities Management could use this program again with simple modifications to the theme, rewards, and recognition. Tailoring also provides design options for other institutions that want to help work groups review their successes and accomplishments, as well as

recognize their challenges and areas for improvements, on their journeys to a safer workplace.

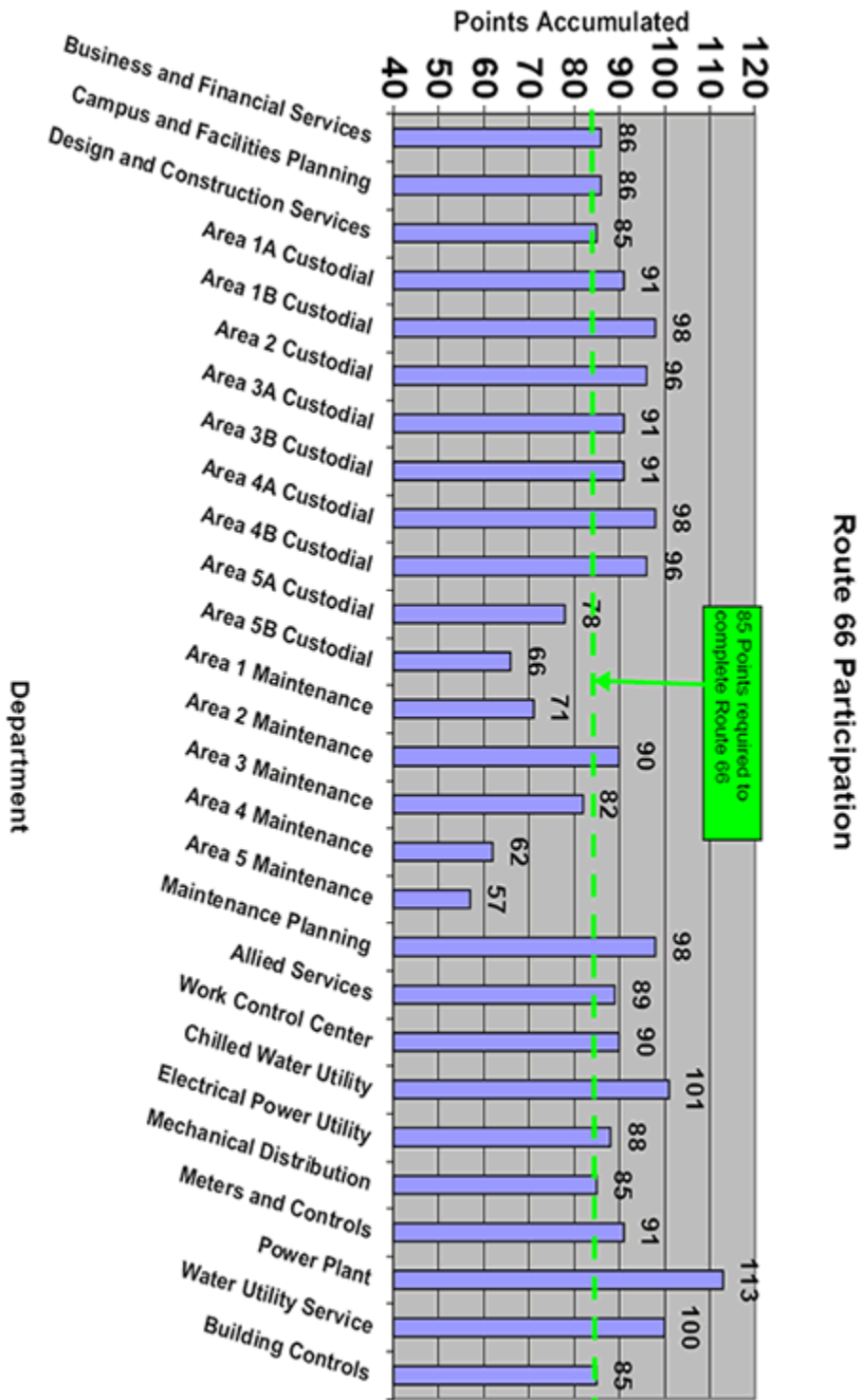
## Appendix A

Route 66 scorecard.

Systems of Safety	Safety Training	Wellness	Incident Investigation	Hazard Observation	Communication
All staff are trained in Systems of Safety	All staff complete their annual required safety training	All units have both Healthwise Books available in their area and have completed the QUIZ	An Incident Investigation Kit is fully stocked	Hazard Observation Checklist is developed	A Safety Center is located in the area
Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete
Monthly safety talks are held with all staff in the area	<b>FREE GAS</b> Every month after all staff have completed required safety training	Wellness Features are scheduled quarterly	Any and all recordable injuries and near misses are investigated *	Checklist is used monthly	Safety Practices Roadmap is posted and reviewed with staff monthly
Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete	Not Complete In Progress Complete

- If no injuries or near misses occurred, check complete.

Appendix B



Appendix C



Date	OSHA Recordable Injuries	OSHA Recordable Injuries Per 100 Employees	Lost Work Days	First Reports of Injury	First Reports of Injury Investigated	Near Miss Incidents
2004	92	13.8	959	182	11	5
2005	73	11.4	1063	152	105	13
2006	49	7.6	764	134	124	23



## Appendix D

# Flu Vaccinations

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	Facilities Management Utilization
2005	183
2006	320 (51%) \$4371 savings

Cost-Benefit Analysis of a Strategy to Vaccinate Healthy Working Adults Against Influenza, Kristin L. Nichol, Archives of Internal Medicine, March 12, 2001; 161(55):749-759

**UI Wellness**



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A much higher number of FM employees received a vaccine in 2006 (N=320 or 51% of the eligible population) versus 2005 (N=183). A 2001 study in the Archives of Internal Medicine reported a savings of \$13.66 per individual receiving the flu vaccination.