2019 National Safety Conference for the Poultry Industry Highlights Safety as a Core Value

Tucker, Ga., Aug. 29, 2019 – Industry safety professionals recently gathered in Destin, Florida, to discuss best practices and challenges facing those involved in poultry production and processing. The National Safety Conference for the Poultry Industry, held Aug. 12-14, meets on an annual basis and is sponsored by the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association and the Agriculture Technology Research Program at the Georgia Tech Research Institute.

The conference included a discussion on “Safety Culture as a Value,” featuring Chad Randolph, corporate director of safety and health for Pilgrim’s, Rick Hellinga, senior director of health, safety and loss prevention for Simmons Foods, and Doug Sikes, safety director for Crider Foods. During the discussion, Sikes warned attendees against allowing temporary goals and objectives to take priority over safety.

"We've moved from defining safety as a priority to defining it as a core value. Depending on the pressures we're under, we tend to slide our core values to the side in order to meet our desires and objectives,” Sikes explained. “If I have a supervisor that tells me I need to get 100 boxes out the door today, that puts me under pressure. Let's say he comes back later when I have 50 boxes out the door and ramps up that pressure, telling me that I’m not going to meet the goal. He never actually said to me ‘don't work safely,’ but the pressure builds a perception in my mind that what matters in that moment is getting those boxes out the door. That is what we have to be careful of. We need to make sure we are building a culture where safety remains a core value, regardless of changing goals and objectives.”

Speakers also shared best practices for specific issues facing production and processing facilities. Douglas Rohkohl, senior designer for VAA Engineering, and Karl Von Knobelsdorff, president and CEO of Knobelsdorff Electric, Inc., shared a presentation on feed mill design that focused on mitigating the potential dangers of fire explosions.

A discussion on hydrogen sulfide was presented by Matt Jackson, regional safety manager for Simmons Foods, who offered advice on best monitoring and reactionary practices. During his presentation, Jackson succinctly summarized the core message of the three-day conference, commenting, “By putting people first, we are providing people with the tools and information they need to do their job safely every time.”

A record 230 poultry facilities were recognized during the conference for their outstanding safety performance through the implementation of innovative and effective employee safety and health programs over the last year.
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY) is the all-feather organization representing the complete spectrum of today’s poultry industry, whose mission is to progressively serve member companies through research, education, communication and technical assistance. Founded in 1947, USPOULTRY is based in Tucker, Georgia.

Photo caption: