



After a field safety orientation, Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Staff get an up-close look at the Saddle Creek Retention Pond.

Focus on Safety

The Omaha CSO Program is, in one word, complex. As a 20-year Program comprised of almost 100 separate projects with work including sewer separations, street repair, tunneling, and building construction, it takes a team of hundreds of people to ensure all work meets project specifications and is completed on-schedule and on-budget.

So how does the Omaha CSO Program Management Team (PMT) keep a focus on safety while coordinating this massive and intricate Program? By building safety into every Program process.

“The CSO Program stresses that safety is a value not a priority,” said Kent Bienlien, CSO Program Assurance Team Lead. “Priorities can change, but if something adds value to the Program it will become intrinsic to how we do our work. It’s important to us that everyone—whether a City Project Manager, designer, consultant, member of the public, or construction worker— gets home safely every day.”

The PMT uses the following process to integrate health & safety into the Program:

- **Identify hazards** – What can go wrong?
- **Assess risk** – What is the worst that can happen?
- **Develop controls** – What needs to be done?
- **Prepare plans** – How do we communicate requirements?
- **Verify compliance** – How do we know it’s being done?

In order to mitigate identified risks, the CSO Program developed a comprehensive set of Field Safety Instructions (FSI). The FSI defines procedures and requirements for the health and safety of PMT staff and visitors whether in the office or performing services such as site visits, construction observation, flow monitoring and public engagement activities. The FSI details roles and responsibilities, documentation requirements and even

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Staff in the field wear personal protective equipment.



PMT staff take care to follow safety protocols when visiting project sites.

disciplinary actions to be taken in the case of safety violations.

The CSO program also identified that the highest risks for injuries would be to workers directly involved in construction observation or other construction site activities. In addition to the FSI, Construction Site Access Orientation instructions are developed for each construction site where the PMT engineering firms provide onsite observation. These instructions identify site-specific risks, house information on the nearest location for medical assistance, and specify the required training levels for anyone requesting access to that construction site.

PMT safety protocols do not extend to contractors' construction activities. Contractors for each individual project are responsible for the health and safety of their teams and develop, maintain and

document their own requirements and procedures. If unsafe conditions are observed or encountered, it is immediately reported to the appropriate contractor personnel to address.

Steve Marks, Construction Manager for the South Interceptor Force Main project, explains: "While many of our projects could be seen as similar, each site and the needs for each individual project are never the same. Every project team is required to complete a site-specific safety plan before work even begins. And PMT staff begin each day in the field with a safety meeting."

Planning and preparation help the Omaha CSO Program set the stage for success, but ensuring a safe and healthy work environment requires attention from every team member, every day.

While there are PMT staff specifically dedicated to health and safety, such as the Safety Coordinator and Environmental Manager, all field staff receive Health, Safety and Environment Training appropriate to their role and take personal responsibility for following procedures and communicating potential hazards. Regular audits and inspections are conducted to verify compliance.

For the Omaha CSO Program, safety is never a background concern; every day we all work together to keep the spotlight on safety.