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Ensuring regulatory compliance and processing the vast amounts of information associated with it is never-ending. New tools not only save time, they also can provide benefits well beyond the environmental health and safety function. Choose wisely.

Information is central to fulfilling mandated obligations for environmental, health, and safety (EH&S) compliance reporting; quantifying and documenting progress toward sustainability; and supporting decisions associated with best maintenance practices and capacity assurance. But information is only as good (and useful) as its sources, gathering methods and timeliness.

Too often, excessive time may be expended in collecting, analyzing, re-formatting and preparing consistent and uniform reports. Multiple (and far-flung) locations, languages and regulations can present unwanted complexities. Incompatible IT platforms and reporting protocols can make communications and reporting all the more challenging. All present roadblocks to meaningful data management and application.

Now, however, solutions have arrived via electronic EH&S information management systems customized to serve across geographical, functional and cultural lines. These Web-based suites of software modules have been shown to enable more consistent regulatory compliance reporting, uniform record-keeping and streamlined decision-making while advancing reliability and sustainability initiatives within a manufacturing organization. Other inherent advantages

include real-time access to a common global repository of data, elimination of redundancies and improved risk management.

So much data, so little time

Most manufacturing enterprises probably could write “books” about the volumes of data they must routinely collect, process and manage whether to satisfy compliance reporting requirements or monitor internal operations. It’s a never-ending task.

The amount of effort put into compiling and managing EH&S data, though, can be staggering, especially when companies must rely upon paper-based systems for the job.

In one case, managers at multiple global locations reported that as much as 25% of their time was spent just collecting, analyzing, re-formatting and preparing the massive amounts of necessary data for required EH&S reports.

Fig. 1. Among other things, new far-reaching, modular software solutions for management of EH&S data can make a company's compliance activities much less time-consuming than traditional paper-based approaches.

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