



The FMC Green River facility produces 70 to 100 railcars of soda ash per day.

## FMC Mines with Safety

By Gail Snyder

**T**reasures show up in the most surprising places. Take the ancient basin of a once 20,000 square-mile ancient lake in Green River, Wyoming, for instance. That treasure discovered in 1938 and first mined by FMC Corporation is trona, a mineral rich with the raw material necessary for producing soda ash. So what does soda ash do for you? Think of your world without glass for one! The people at FMC's Green River facility produce and refine natural soda ash from ore so that we can have glass along with a number of other items such as detergents, paper, textiles, and baking soda.

**We have gotten some amazing memorandums and letters, many using the term 'life changing...This is a very rich experience for all who have attended.**

– Jim Pearce

### Insights on ADI's Behavioral Process

"This training can be used to improve performance in any area of our business . . . If the proper behavior is used it will surely help improve our productivity in the work area. Our work is to decide which behaviors are needed to meet the goal and how we are going to change the behavior using this process.

"Through positive feedback and celebration of good measures, people are more likely to enjoy their working environment.

"I believe that it can produce a safer place to work, better process control, maybe more throughput if needed and a different site culture.

"It has given me some insight around why my actions don't always produce the results I am expecting."

—Adrian Parkyn, Maintenance Manager

The deposits at Green River are the largest in the world and over 800 hardworking people at FMC produce between 3 and 4 million tons of soda ash per year; that's approximately 70 to 100 railcars each day! The fact that FMC has mined more miles of underground tunnels than there are miles of streets in San Francisco is an indeed amazing fact, but now an equally amazing fact can be related. In a rough and demanding industry, Green River's managers have discovered an exciting and different way of empowering their workforce.

"It's an interesting tale," says Jim Pearce, Alkali Chemical Division Manufacturing Director. "The quest grew out of our effort to improve safety." Green River is a large and complex mining and refining facility. "Though safety has always been the top priority, in the late 1990s and early 2000s the OSHA recordables were running high," he explains. "Even one injury is one too many, and we have always been committed to making FMC Green River as safe as possible."

### THE TIME IS NOW!

The management team was looking for new ways to improve safety when they heard about the 2008 Behavioral Safety Now conference in Reno, Nevada, featuring Aubrey Daniels, the

world's leading authority on applying behavioral science in the workplace. They sent several frontline hourly union employees to the conference, and to Pearce's delight, every one of the employees returned completely "pumped," particularly one operator who hadn't seemed that enthused previously. "He came back highly and genuinely engaged," Pearce says. "I'm thinking that whatever happened to him, we've got to do for other people!"

That's when Pearce decided to bring Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) into the



Safety has always been a first priority at FMC, but the addition of the positive reinforcement component has changed the overall culture of the mine.

## R&R – Review & Refresh

Everyone who has attended the course is encouraged to come to the R&R meetings each Friday to share their successes and discuss any concerns about implementing a new approach based on performance pinpointing, measurement, feedback, and positive reinforcement.

In fact the club membership has out-grown its square-foot capacity, meaning that several satellite locations have opened up to accommodate all of the attendees. Walking out of one of the meetings one day after in-depth discussions on recognizing people for their positive behaviors, Pearce turned to Adrian Parkyn, maintenance manager, and asked, “Would you ever have believed that this group of managers would sit around and talk about a subject like how to positively reinforce for this long and in this way?” Parkyn answered, “No. But I always wanted to work for a company that did, and now I do.”

FMC picture. Pearce met Aubrey in the early '90s and had read some of his books regarding behavior-based performance improvement and gaining discretionary effort from employees, so he was familiar with the approach. However, when he and a group of managers attended the Application of Performance Management Technology (APMT) course in Atlanta, Georgia, something changed. “I realized ADI had much more to teach us,” he said. “This was a technique we could use to take our safety efforts to the next level.”

Since then approximately 60 FMC leaders have been educated by ADI, and plans are to educate all of the leaders. Pearce asks each person who attends to share their thoughts on the effectiveness and impact of their experience. “We have gotten some amazing memorandums and letters, many using the term ‘life changing,’” he says. (See “Insights on ADI’s Behavioral Process.”) “This is a very rich experience for all who have attended.”

Jim Strauss, Business Leader of the mono-hydrate soda ash processing plant, agrees with Pearce regarding the Atlanta-based course. “The interaction with people from different industries was very powerful,” he comments. “You see how the science works for them and how it can work for you. I think we

were able to tie everything together so much better than if we were only talking about FMC issues.”

## BACK TO THE PLANT

Upon his return from Atlanta, Strauss donned his hard hat early one morning and walked onto the site. A foreman asked him, “Where are you going so early?” Strauss answered, “I’m going out to find somebody doing something right!”

Strauss did find several people doing something right that morning, told them about it, and continues to do so today. He and his direct reports began charting the number of “meaningful safety contacts” they made, which means recognizing people for doing something right regarding safety and/or discussing a relevant safety issue. To make it a habit, they graphed these interactions for three weeks.

Occasionally someone received a one-dollar coin when seen doing a safe behavior, like the truck driver who appeared shocked when Strauss stepped up to his cab, handed him one of the coins and said, “Thanks for wearing your seat belt.” At first the driver gave Strauss an odd look but then went and showed the coin to his own supervisor and shared the story.

**“We know now that if we want a different work environment, we need to start looking for what we want to reinforce.”**

**—Jim Pearce**

But the tangible items are just icing on the cake as far as the managers who are now systematically using this “ADI stuff” are concerned. Strauss points out that he has been





In a rough and demanding industry, FMC Green River's managers have discovered an exciting different way of empowering their workforce.

using many of the elements of behavioral management for his past 30 years with the company. He now understands the scientific base of other people's behaviors and how they

are reinforced for both good and bad habits.

"I wish I had taken this course a long time ago," he says. "It becomes very relevant very fast and works on many aspects of everything you do in your life."

### Q & A with Green River Mine

As the health, safety, and environmental manager for FMC's Green River Mine, Bret Pizzato has a full plate, but that didn't stop him from taking a leading role in promoting the effort of ADI's behavioral management process onsite. He credits many others for having more hands-on implementations, but shared a few thoughts on how the new approach has worked at Green River.

#### Why did the first core team from Green River attend ADI's Advanced Performance Management Training?

We were really looking at something to address safety. It works great for safety but we didn't realize at the time that it applies to everything.

#### Does it mesh well with your existing safety initiative?

Yes, it folds in very well and enhances our safety program. We were doing behavior-based safety (BBS), going out and doing the observations, but we were mostly concentrating on trying to find people doing at-risk behavior. We were more looking for people doing the wrong thing, getting on them, and saying, "You can't do it this way!" We weren't putting enough emphasis on trying to identify people doing safe behaviors and reinforcing those behaviors. Now we understand that consequences are the key to changing behavior. We're looking at the good things people are doing and giving them positive recognition for it.

### IT STARTED WITH SAFETY

"We have had a lot of safety success stories, but it has also impacted the culture of the site," says Pearce. "People are reinforcing their peers and tracking their own performance. They are putting stickers on the wall to monitor their accomplishments . . . and we're talking about miners! These are not soft people."

Pearce refers to a safety initiative driven by Gordon Christiansen, mine maintenance business leader and an attendee at the first ADI session. Personal safety in the mine requires individuals, at times, to work alone and therefore requires a great deal of self-management so Christiansen and his

## Q & A with Green River Mine Continued

### Has the workforce noticed that effort?

Yes they are noticing. Back in 2007 about 30 percent of the people were involved in our Safe Workplace Initiative (SWI) program, meaning that they attended safety meetings and performed safety audits. Last year that increased to around 40 percent, and we are definitely over 50 percent this year. Because we are doing the training, and doing positive reinforcement, the employees are seeing that this is a good thing and they're starting to get more involved.

### What advice would you give to anyone trying to use this process?

One thing we are realizing is that, I think like most companies, we reinforce groups. We understand that we need to try and focus more on an individual's behavior and what really reinforces that individual.

### What is the main difference in the way you are applying BBS?

Well, we are still measured on our lagging indicators, of course, but we are trying to recognize and reward people for participating in safety, active safety, focusing on doing audits and bringing safe behaviors to habit, versus "going a year without having an accident."

### It's been a short time since you started this effort.

#### Is it having an impact on your safety data?

Oh yes, I think it is. I believe the whole management group is changing. We're reinforcing the right things and employees believe by our actions that management is serious about safety. Last year we had about 32 recordable actions and this year, [as of November] we're at 16. That's a huge reduction.

managers set out to make that fact relevant on a daily basis. Their goal is to recognize their employees for taking safety seriously.

At first, when Christiansen discussed the ideas of pinpointing safe behaviors, self-monitoring, and adding stickers next to people's names on a chart, many of the mine employees told him it sounded like a bunch of baloney. Today, this positive reinforcement component has been added to the safety efforts already in place. After employees experienced the satisfaction of adding a few stickers beside their

names they even began to bring their own stickers from home.

It didn't happen overnight, but the key to the change, according to Christiansen, was the new approach they learned from ADI. Managers and supervisors learned to track the number of times they reinforce individuals. "We were walking into work areas where there were a thousand things right and one thing wrong and the only thing we dwelled on was the one wrong thing," he said. "Now we know we have to find individual reinforcers for people and find them doing things right. We have to get to know people and reinforce them for success."

Christiansen noticed a big difference at every level. "We all realize that yelling at somebody off the cuff does no good," he said. "Every behavior has an antecedent and a consequence. We can analyze the consequences of a behavior and recognize when we are the ones reinforcing it. It's empowering."

He has also noticed a major shift in the perspective of mine employees who have been given more control over their own safe behavior. "They have shifted from blaming someone else to taking responsibility and even analyzing their own mistakes," says Christiansen. "We had a minor incident and the guy actually pointed out a different behavior that would have prevented it."

So how did he win over some of the biggest skeptics?

**"I'm thinking that whatever happened to him, we've got to do for other people!"**

**—Jim Pearce**



FMC has mined more miles of tunnels than there are miles of streets in San Francisco.

Along with regular social reinforcement, a few meaningful tangibles for meeting goals, and some celebrations, Christiansen and other FMC managers openly acknowledge that their success depends on the success of their employees. As he explained it to one seasoned employee, “My job is to get you to feel the same way about doing your work at FMC as you feel about the activities you enjoy on your days off.”

As for the habit of making meaningful safety contacts, Strauss says that every once in a while he graphs his performance, just to make sure he keeps that habit polished.

**“I know this process is having an impact because this is our best safety year ever.”**  
—Jim Pearce

He also believes the process meshes well with the Safe Workplace Initiative (SWI), the plant’s comprehensive “Behavior Based” safety approach, and that behavioral pinpointing enables the team to get at the root cause of safety problems faster.

Pearce agrees. “I know this process is having an impact because this is our best safety year ever,” he says.

## DIGGING DEEPER

From a safety initiative to a culture change that is permeating the way business is done in a demanding industry, the Green River facility has made major strides in a few short months. “The general attitude is different across the site. This change is showing up in many small but impactful ways,” says Pearce.

As the plant moves forward, FMC plans to send more people through training and to progress with further coaching from ADI specialists. “This is just the beginning of their journey, and we are enthused about the way they’ve grabbed this and moved ahead. We look forward to a long association in terms of coaching and personal development with this great group of exemplars,” says Darnell Lattal, ADI’s president and CEO.

“Turning the light on is what ADI has done,” says Pearce. “In our day-to-day work environment, there have always been an infinite number of examples where we get to reward the right behavior. We now see that if we want a different work environment, we must start looking for what we want to reinforce. It is having a dramatic impact.”

• • • • •

## [About the Author]

### GAIL SNYDER

Gail Snyder is a staff writer for Aubrey Daniels International. For the past 27 years, she has worked with clients to share their stories of the impact the science of behavior has had on their people and their business. In addition, Gail was the editor of Performance Management Magazine from 1987 to 2004.

---

## [About ADI]

Regardless of your industry or expertise, one thing remains constant: People power your business. Since 1978 Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) has been dedicated to accelerating the business and safety performance of companies worldwide by using positive, practical approaches grounded in the science of behavior and engineered to ensure long-term sustainability. ADI provides clients with the tools and methodologies to help move people toward positive, results-driven accomplishments. Our clients accelerate strategy execution while fostering employee engagement and positive accountability at all levels of their organization.

### CONNECT WITH US

[aubreydaniels.com/stay-connected](http://aubreydaniels.com/stay-connected)

**web:** [aubreydaniels.com](http://aubreydaniels.com)

**blog:** [aubreydanielsblog.com](http://aubreydanielsblog.com)

**twitter:** [twitter.com/aubreydaniels](https://twitter.com/aubreydaniels)

