

Choosing an Air System Vendor: Safety – Part 2



Choosing a scrap collection vendor is a lot like choosing a marriage partner. It's easy to fall in love with a proposal that looks great on the surface. But what happens after the blush of first love has worn off? You and your trim system vendor are going to be together for a long time so it makes sense to dig a little deeper before making a decision. What questions should you ask to assess whether your vendor is a good candidate for a long-term partnership?

Last week, we looked at the questions you should ask potential vendors to assess their ability to design a system that is safe to operate. This week, the spotlight falls on the questions to ask about the work practices of the vendor's employees and their ability to comply with your internal safety policies.

- Does the vendor have a human resources and/or safety director that is overseeing compliance with local, state and federal safety regulations? Ask to meet him or her.
- Does the vendor have a written safety program? Ask to see it.

- Does the vendor's human resources or safety director provide safety training during new employee orientation, and annual training as required by OSHA and other standards? Ask to see certificates of completion for safety training relevant to the needs of your operation.
- What type of safety training do vendor employees receive, especially those who will be entering your plant to perform the installation and commissioning of your trim collection system? Examples included heavy equipment operation, lock out/tag out, permit-required confined space entry, aerial lift equipment, electrical, personal protective equipment, fall protection, hazcom/GHS, and scaffolding use. Ask about the vendor's commitment to annual and periodic training required by the OSHA and company standards that apply to your operation.
- If where your company's safety standards exceed OSHA requirements, will the vendor's employees willingly comply with your standards?
- Will the vendor's human resources/safety director be in contact with your company's safety or engineering personnel to coordinate the plan of action that will guarantee that the vendor's employees will receive the training required to comply with your safety policies? Ask the vendor to prove that crews have the necessary training and certifications before they enter your facility.
- When applicable, does the vendor's installation crew receive training on the safety issues common to your operation? Ask for proof in the way of certificates of completion for training programs.
- Is there regular communication between the vendor's installation crew and the vendor's safety director about safety issues arising on your job site? Find out if the vendor's safety director is equipped to offer on-the-spot safety training to the crews installing your system if needed.
- What is the vendor's safety record? What is the incident rate? How many recordable accidents have they had in the past five years? Ask to see safety records.
- Does the vendor's human resources/safety director analyze accident trends to determine where additional training is needed? Find out if the vendor conducts accident investigations and other analysis to identify and eliminate hazards.
- Is the vendor's human resources/safety director familiar with the hazards unique to your industry? Find out if he or she has ever visited an operation in your industry.
- Does the vendor's safety policy mandate that installation crews comply with your safety policies and procedures, even if they exceed OSHA requirements? Ask to see a copy of their policy.

As you ask your questions, watch the vendor's reaction. Vendors with a well-organized safety program will be able to provide answers quickly and cheerfully because they're accustomed to providing this information during the RFP process. If you sense any foot-dragging, however, take note. Insufficient communication from a prospective vendor rarely bodes well for open, timely communication throughout the design, installation and commissioning of your scrap system. And when it comes to safety, good communication between the customer and vendor makes all the difference.

If you're interested in working with a vendor with a strong commitment to safety (and one of the only air-conveyed scrap system companies in the in the country with a dedicated human resources/safety director), call 615.230.9500 or [email us](#).