

## **Member Spotlight: Spuncast, Inc., Watertown**

### **John Krueger, Environmental and Safety Director**

What is your professional history and how did you get to where you are today?

While working on my degree in college, I worked at the Department of Pollution Control at Southern Illinois University. The Department of Pollution Control was responsible for environmental and safety compliance for the university. In addition, we worked on Environmental, Health and Safety projects with local industry, which really sparked my interest in the safety and environmental field. I then landed an Environmental Engineering position with the Maytag Corporation, a washer/dryer manufacturer. I quickly was assigned safety responsibilities as well. From Maytag, I moved on to Kohler Company where I was also hired as an environmental engineer. Eventually the position name was changed to environmental, health and safety (EHS) coordinator; I was actually the first EHS coordinator for an operating division at Kohler.

A lot of the environmental concerns were being addressed, but there was a big void in safety management. This is where the opportunity to address safety really grew for me. At the time, Kohler Co. had EHS positions in the corporate office but not in the manufacturing locations where it was most needed. Now most operating divisions have a local EHS coordinator. I was promoted several times at Kohler Co.; holding the position of EHS Program Coordinator, Safety Specialist, and lastly, Supervisor of Safety and Industrial Hygiene for the entire Kohler operation worldwide.

After 16 years, I moved on to an EHS Manager position in consulting. While there, I was approached about an Environmental and Safety Director position at Spuncast, Inc., returning to the foundry industry. Things worked out and everything is going well at Spuncast, Inc.

What is your specific title and role at Spuncast?

My title is Environmental and Safety Director at Spuncast, Inc. ([www.spuncast.com](http://www.spuncast.com)), a centrifugal foundry operation. Spuncast manufactures centrifugal castings used as cylinders for hydraulic systems, pumps, valves, mineral and ore processing equipment, glass manufacturing equipment, and other operations requiring cylinder bodies. The foundry is the core aspect of the company with machining and heat treating operations. I am responsible for the safety and environmental compliance for the company and its employees.

Your company has been a member of the Wisconsin Safety Council for a very long time. What do you see as the greatest benefit the Safety Council offers to you in your role, and to your company overall?

The greatest benefit of WSC to my role and company is the excellent networking foundation available. There are numerous diverse manufacturing operations with varying experiences and approaches to safety compliance that can be tweaked or

modified to assist your own operation with safety compliance. There are a lot of improvements happening in the world of safety, and sometimes the solution involves simply finding the right approach to solving a problem in an efficient and realistic manner.

What would you say is the greatest benefit of WSC of which most people are probably unaware?

The greatest benefits of WSC are the safety training opportunities. WSC does a great job of offering various training at very reasonable costs. The sessions are sometimes part of a larger conference such as the Annual Safety and Health Conference, or they are available as an individual course offered throughout the state at various times. You don't need to travel across the country and receive some high-priced training and travel. You can even arrange for the training to be held on-site directly at your own facility at a reasonable price. The training opportunities are well presented sessions that are informative, efficient, and concise. The instructors are well versed in their topics and the handouts are always useful in adaptation to one's own safety program.

How do you see the current state of the economy having an effect on your company, and on the safety profession?

The current economy has affected Spuncast, Inc. We experienced a layoff of employees during the first quarter of 2009, reducing our head count to 105 employees. Prior to that, our original plans were to be at roughly 250 employees by summer 2009 with a foundry expansion project. This expansion is still in the works, but with a time delay to be determined. Things are looking a little better and we have rehired a handful of employees. Safety is still an important issue no matter what the employee head count is. Especially in the current economic condition, workplace injuries can be devastating to a company's operations. Another concern with the declining economy is that there will be reduced opportunities for safety professionals to attend conferences, reducing networking opportunities while eventually impacting the training sessions actually taking place due to reduced attendance.

Anything else to add?

Everyone has a different idea about what safety is and is not. To me, safety starts with integrity, truth, and respect. Having the integrity to follow the rules and procedures even when you are not being watched is vital. Getting to the truth of an incident without covering it up is also important to assist in effective corrective action. And of course respecting everyone's idea or view of safety, although sometimes you need to redirect the thought process on safety. Integrity comes into play with all of this as the glue that holds safety together.