

Polyoak Visconti Plastics: Leadership in food safety

Polyoak Visconti Plastics in Cape Town has embarked on a ground breaking food safety programme that is a first in South Africa. Under the guidance of their plant health and safety officer Etienne Skein, Polyoak has initiated a 5 step process that will ultimately track employee hand hygiene performance against pre-determined standards. Soap and sanitiser dispensers capable of counting each time they are used have been installed throughout their P.E.T packaging plant in the Western Cape. These dispensers, supplied by Steiner Hygiene, will provide the critical information necessary to set meaningful hand hygiene standards, assess the impact of training programmes, and monitor employee compliance on a daily basis. Deon Cupido, plant manager at Polyoak, declared: *“For the first time we will have the quantitative information we need to accurately determine employee hand hygiene behaviour. These measures will provide us the control we want and the assurance our customers need.”*

Gemma Clarke of Handwashingforlife® confirmed that Polyoak is the first food industry supplier in South Africa to fully implement a management system to track and monitor the frequency of employee hand hygiene practices. According to Gemma; *“Most food processing and food service operators are fully aware of the importance of good hand hygiene but have been frustrated by the lack of measurement tools. They know that poor employee hand hygiene is the leading cause of foodborne illness but have had no measurable way to manage this critical variable.”*

The 5 step process being followed at Polyoak is the **Hands-On System** developed by Handwashingforlife® to meet best practice requirements for food operators. The first 3 steps in the process have been completed, preliminary frequency targets have been established and best practice equipment has been installed.

In two weeks the entire staff will undergo training using the Handwashingforlife® Team Rally training technique. The Rallies will create awareness and understanding for proper hand washing. Etienne Skein commented: *“We want our staff to know that we will now control and effectively measure their compliance to hand hygiene standards; but, more importantly, we also want each and every employee to fully understand why it is so vital to wash their hands. We are looking forward to measuring the impact that the Handwashingforlife® training programme will have on management and employee behaviour.”*

Once training is completed the monitoring, tracking and management process will begin in earnest. Data entry tools will allow the counts to be recorded and the results will be posted for staff on a daily basis. The computer program and daily log sheets are supplied by Handwashingforlife® and in a few minutes Etienne will be able to enter data and print the results in graphic formats. Baseline targets for the number of hand washes expected per shift as well as the daily levels achieved can be depicted. The graphic results will be posted in a prominent place for employees to see that hand washing is a priority and their performance is being measured.

