



## Case Study #2

*Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc.*

*The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) has assembled a Risk Assessment Committee for the purposes of communicating to the business community the importance of the risk assessment process; improving the risk assessment competencies of safety, health, and environmental professionals; providing cost-effective solutions as business partners; and taking a leadership role in developing risk assessment policy. The product of this committee has been the development of a Risk Assessment Institute.*

*A key focus area of the Risk Assessment Institute is the study of corporations and safety professionals with successful Risk Assessment Programs in an effort to learn from their experiences and assist others in the development of their own risk assessment program. The case studies examine their experiences as they developed and implemented their risk assessment program, their lessons learned, and their suggestions to others who may be getting started on their own risk assessment program development.*

### Case Study Subject

<b>Company</b>	Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc.
<b>Address</b>	33 Coffee Lane, Waterbury, Vermont 05676
<b>Safety Professional</b>	Debra Kilpatrick and Tammy White
<b>Phone number</b>	800-545-2326
<b>Date</b>	June 5, 2013

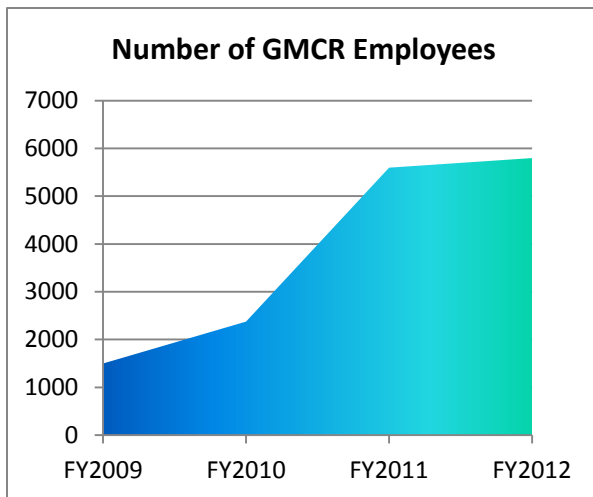


## Background

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc. (GMCR) was founded in 1980 after Founder Bob Stiller got a great cup of coffee at a shop in Waitsfield, Vermont, and purchased the coffee shop. Over the next nearly 30 years, the business grew steadily through acquisition and expansion of existing facilities – employing approximately 1500 people in 2009. The past four years have brought explosive growth, and GMCR now employs close to 6000 employees! GMCR prides itself on being an innovative, high-growth, socially responsible company and has been a leader in environmentally conscientious production and management. The company has also always considered employee health and safety (H&S) to be paramount to their success, and they have successfully implemented a variety of safety initiatives.

## The Need for Action

In 2009, with plans on the table that would soon quadruple their workforce, GMCR began to re-organize their employee H&S program with a new approach spear-headed by a new Safety Manager – Debra Kilpatrick. Debra, a Certified Safety Professional, came to GMCR with 21 years’ experience in the H&S field.



Historically, GMCR has focused their safety efforts on compliance with regulations and consensus standards. GMCR takes a global approach to safety, resulting in a multi-site approach throughout their nine manufacturing facilities in five U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. Debra leads a team of safety professionals; each manufacturing facility has safety staff.

Soon after she joined GMCR, Debra hired Tammy White as a Safety Supervisor, with whom she had worked closely in their previous employment. In 2009, with growth and acquisitions in full swing,

Debra and her team saw a need to prioritize resource investment in safety. In their employment with a previous employer, Debra and Tammy had lived the risk assessment approach to employee safety. GMCR management and employees were familiar with a risk-assessment type approach in certain aspects of their safety program such as job hazard analysis/job safety analysis.

## New Beginning

GMCR made huge capital investments as they grew from 2009 – 2013. A portion of those investments were made to secure worker safety, and many decisions had to be made as to how to spend that money. In addition, many of the processes at the manufacturing facilities were expanded, and new processes were introduced. The H&S team “took the bull by the horns” and started a risk assessment process that would not only provide good data to help determine the priorities for safety, but would also provide information they needed for safety assessing new equipment at the Factory Acceptance



Testing and Site Accessing Testing. They began the process by developing employee training designed to ensure employees understood how to participate in the risk assessment process and also understood why it was important.

Since nothing replaces hands-on experience in conducting risk assessments, GMCR held a “rapid improvement event” around the conduct of risk assessments. Many risk assessments were conducted during a concentrated one-week team event at their Vermont facility, and the result was an experienced group of employees capable of returning to their own facilities and leading the risk assessment process.

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Green Mountain Coffee Roasters is a caring company that wants to do the right thing to keep people safe.

*Tammy White*

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As the risk assessment process developed, the H&S group realized that a team approach is a key element in the risk assessment process. Much

attention is paid to the make-up of a risk assessment team. An ideal team would include a risk-assessment-trained person such as a safety specialist or safety committee member, a production/distribution line employee that conducts the task on a daily basis, an expert in the equipment or process being assessed, and “fresh eyes” – an employee from another department that might see something that a person routinely conducting a task might not.

### Program in Practice

The risk assessment process at GMCR begins at the factory acceptance test before a new piece of equipment is even introduced into a facility with a factory acceptance test.

A base risk assessment is performed for each task, and, depending upon the results of the base risk assessment, additional risk assessments specific to things like lockout tagout and personal protective equipment are conducted. But, each risk assessment follows a familiar pattern:

1. Define
2. Measure
3. Analyze
4. Improve
5. Control

They have begun to initiate risk assessments for task or piece of equipment being put on a server accessible to all GMCR Safety Professionals. While no two facilities have the exact same equipment, there is similar equipment at many facilities. Having the assessments online and available to other facilities gives those other facilities a starting reference to conduct their own risk assessments.

### Results and Lessons Learned

GMCR has realized several benefits from making risk assessments a strategic tool in their safety program. Risk assessments:

- Help prioritize safety initiatives during a period of fast-paced growth.



- Involves employees at all levels in the safety process.
- “Cross pollinates” employees by bringing employees out of their standard work zone into other areas of the facility.
- Provide a quantitative way to identify risk and quantitative data to show risk reduction.

Employees have responded positively to the increased focus on a risk-assessment thought process. It improves their acceptance of the safety process because the assessments are specific to their facility, there is more visible focus on safety, and employees better understand the safety focus.

The safety team also found that as new facilities without safety staff are acquired, a well-developed and defined risk assessment program is very useful and important.

When asked to advise other companies that might be considering increasing their focus on risk assessments, Debra and Tammy offer the following:

- Develop and conduct good hand-on training.
- Be sure employees are properly trained and use a team approach to conducting risk assessments.
- Risk assessments must be conducted at the piece of equipment or alongside the task being assessed; conducting risk assessments is not a desk job.
- Have a plan for follow-up – conduct a final check, keep communication open, and get feedback from the employees performing the tasks evaluated.
- Start small – achieve small successes and work toward bigger concerns at a reasonable pace. Let the team see that improvement was successful.