

PROFILE

SAFETY SUPPLY SOUTH

By Russ Willcutt



When work crews aren't adequately equipped, downtime occurs and money is lost. This company will help you to avoid that scenario.

WHETHER IT INVOLVES THE ERECTION of new towers or O&M services for existing turbines, wind farm project managers know that when their crews arrive, they should be ready to go to work. Safety Supply South understands this as well, and a longstanding relationship with an existing customer led them to address the situation in a novel way.

“We have a client who had gotten involved in the wind industry, and as we worked with them to meet their needs we realized that many of the items we were pulling together would be required by anyone who’s working on a turbine,” according to Smoke Matthews, president and owner. “That’s when we decided to put together a kit for each crew member containing everything they would need to tackle a particular job once they’d arrived onsite. It was a huge hit, to say the least, so we decided to make these kits available to companies looking for an easy way to make sure their workers were equipped to do their jobs from the moment they reached the wind farm.”

For more than two decades Safety Supply South has been in the business of anticipating its customers’ needs, and then surpassing them. A full-line safety equipment and supply house headquartered in Irmo, South Carolina, the company stocks an expansive inventory of items; everything from fall protection, respiratory and hearing protection to work gloves, rainwear, and gas detection instrumentation, just to name a very few. Having this stock on hand puts them in an ideal position not only to fill orders for wind kits and ship them quickly, but to customize each kit according to the customers’ exact requirements.

“There are standard items that any turbine O&M crew member will need, such as fall protection, lanyards, eye protection, hard hats, and first-aid kits,” says Rob Greene, sales and customer service specialist. “But every job is different, so we’ll work with the customer to tailor each kit accordingly.”

There is no limit to what the company can do, he explains, which is particularly helpful to purchasing agents. “All they have to do is give us a list of what they need, and we’ll make sure each kit we ship meets their specifications exactly,” he says. “Some companies may require each of their workers to have an anemometer, for example, or a torque wrench, so that’s what their kit will contain, and that

even goes for the sizing of harnesses or protective clothing.”

In addition to this level of customization, Safety Supply South also offers private labeling so that each kit bag features the customer’s logo, along with many of the items the kit contains such as hard hats and vests. This is especially useful in light of the fact that many different crews might be working on a single project, so anything that can be done to eliminate confusion in advance is a good investment. “That has also worked to our advantage,” Matthews explains, “since other workers see the kits we’ve prepared and ask where they came from.”

Just as these customized wind kits have aided the company’s clients immeasurably, they have also allowed Safety Supply South to grow into new markets, both in terms of activity as well as geography. “We’ve begun working with wind companies that have contacted us about these kits, so we’ve landed new accounts, but we’ve also started shipping to parts of the world that we really hadn’t reached before,” Greene says. “In the past couple of years we’ve shipped to job sites in Australia, China, Qatar, Canada, Mexico, and the Middle East. There’s really nowhere we can’t reach thanks to the abundance of overnight shipping services that we have available these days.”

Apart from the standard safety equipment and tools that workers need to do their jobs, additional items are sometimes required, such as winter survival gear. “If you think about the remote locations where these wind farms are sited, and the fact that O&M services must be conducted all year round,” Matthews points out, “it’s a good idea to have emergency equipment on hand in case something goes wrong.”

Bundled in a backpack, these winter survival kits contain such things as space blankets, glow sticks, a shovel and hatchet, and water and rations. “It’s all about being prepared,” he says, “and we’re here to help make that happen in advance.”

Even beyond these details, Safety Supply South also keeps up with all the latest wind-industry requirements, making sure the equipment and supplies they provide are current. “We’re big enough to make this happen,” Greene says, “and small enough to take the time to do it right.” ↵