

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS WITH SAFETY TRAINING

Building a global standard for working
on wind farms.

By Katie Dawes



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IN 2010 SAFETY TECHNOLOGY USA joined forces with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) to become the first United States training center to offer the globally recognized Safety Technology safety certification program for the Wind Energy Industry.

Since this training was initially established the U.S. wind energy sector has continued to expand at a rapid rate with an impressive 51,630MW of cumulative wind capacity, and more than 40,000 turbines. Therefore the call for global standardized safety training is becoming more and more relevant.

With the U.S. representing more than 20 percent of the world's installed wind power, it is now more important than ever to ensure the safety training is of the highest priority. In the article that follows Safety Technology USA will be discussing the lessons learned along their journey and the direction they see the safety standards heading.

THE BUILDING OF INDUSTRY

In 1980 the world's first wind farm was installed at Crotched Mountain, New Hampshire, consisting of twenty 30kW wind turbines. Since then the industry has seen an exceptional rate of growth, averaged at an increase of 29.7 percent a year.



ENSURING THE SAFETY OF WORKERS

With this increase of workers needed for the construction, installation, operation and maintenance of these wind farms, there comes a responsibility for the whole industry to ensure that safe working practices are being put in place. A good example of the industry working together to create safety standards nationwide can be seen in the UK with the RenewableUK accredited safety courses for working at heights. This accreditation is recognized and enforced by all of the leading wind farm operation and maintenance companies. Safety Technology's United Kingdom operations gained this accreditation in 2010 and have used their experience and knowledge to deliver the same course from the U.S.

A GLOBAL SAFETY STANDARD

As more and more countries invest in Wind Energy the need for a globally recognised safety standard is vital. By having a recognised safety certification individuals would be able to work on wind farms all over the world, and companies could rest secure in the knowledge that safe work practices were being carried out on site wherever they are based.

A recent survey by the American Wind Energy Association showed that 89 percent of American voters believe increasing the amount of energy the nation gets from wind power is a good idea.

From the emergence of this huge sector new opportunities have arisen, with the wind energy sector supporting roughly 500,000 jobs in the U.S. alone. However, it is not just job opportunities within the sector that have benefited from this growth but also supporting industries. There are now over 470 manufacturing facilities across the U.S. working to make components for wind turbines.

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Earlier this year the Global Wind Organisation (GWO) announced its first release of their “Basic Safety Training” standard

to be used by companies in the wind industry worldwide. GWO has been established by the world leading companies in the sector

to support an injury-free work environment for the construction, operation and maintenance of wind farms, on and offshore.

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To support this aim of an injury-free work environment, GWO has developed a standard for basic safety training to ensure individuals working on wind farms are equipped with the sufficient knowledge and training. The Basic Safety Training standard consists of 5 modules; first aid, manual handling, fire awareness, working at heights, and sea survival.

Safety Technology is one of the first training providers to be approved to deliver the following Basic Safety Training modules; Working at Heights, First Aid and Manual Handling. Managing Director of Safety Technology, Bob Dickens, said this on their recent approval:

“We are delighted to be the first company to achieve multiple RUK GWO accreditation. We have worked closely with GWO members and RUK over the last couple of years and the implementation of a Basic Safety Training standard has long been our goal. It will enable us to deliver the same high quality accredited training in different locations and countries that will be recognized by the industry’s major wind companies and Wind Associations.”

A coalition of the world’s leading wind players including Siemens, Vestas and EON, GWO seems to be the perfect solution for the industries cry for a high level of safety training for employees in the Wind Energy sector, and with GWO’s promise to continue to develop and maintain basic safety training in the industry it seems the only way is up. ✨