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Carol Dorsey
Operation Lifesaver



SystemLink Gets Operation Life Saver on the Right Track with DCAA Compliance

Operation Lifesaver started in Idaho in 1972 when the national average of collisions at highway-rail grade crossings exceeded 12,000 annually. A six-week public awareness campaign called "Operation Lifesaver" was aimed at ending collisions, deaths and injuries at places where roadways cross train tracks, and on railroad rights-of-way. It was sponsored by the office of Governor Cecil Andrus, the Idaho Peace Officers and Union Pacific railroad as a one-time, one-state initiative.

During the campaign's first year, Idaho's crossing-related fatalities dropped by 43 percent. The next year, the Operation Lifesaver campaign spread to Nebraska, where their collision rate was reduced by 26 percent. Kansas and Georgia experienced similar success the following year.

Between 1978 and 1986, while Operation Lifesaver operated under the auspices of the National Safety Council, all 49 continental states started independent Operation Lifesaver programs. In 1986, the national program was released from NSC and incorporated as a national, non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational organization.

Operation Lifesaver's trained and certified volunteer speakers provide free safety presentations for various professions and for all age groups. Their programs are supported by a wide variety of partners, including federal, state, and local government agencies, highway safety organizations, law enforcement, the nation's railroads and their suppliers.

Mixed Signals

While Operation Lifesaver began as a simple non-profit funded by the railroads, their broadened acceptance as a valuable education tool meant they were soon accepting government contracts around the country. As they grew, they turned to SystemLink to provide them with Sage Accpac ERP and the system's expertise they would need to effectively manage their finances. SystemLink helped them build a solid financial management foundation and they were well-positioned for growth. Carol Dorsey, Director of Administration remarks, "SystemLink did such a good job with our original installation of Sage Accpac ERP including both the general modules and the management modules. We have been working with them for at least ten years now and they always deliver!"

As Operation Life Saver's popularity grew, they attracted the attention, and funds, of various government agencies who soon contracted with them to provide their services across the United States. With these government relationships however, came additional oversight requirements and eventually the need to become compliant with The Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) standards.

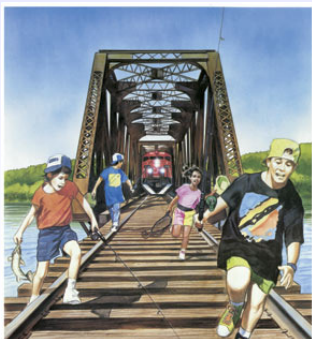
While Operation Lifesaver had strong financial management, DCAA compliance meant a new standard that they weren't yet prepared to meet.

On The Right Track

Again, Operation Lifesaver turned to SystemLink. "They were concerned that they were going to have to replace their current system with something new and were going to have to re-think their financial management processes from the ground up," said Dave Beck from SystemLink. "Because of our broad experience with helping clients achieve DCAA

“SystemLink offers us their vast experience in accounting as well as software. Moreover, they have a complete understanding of what we need to be DCAA compliant. Their complete knowledge in these areas combined with their dedication to listening to our needs and going above and beyond to provide us with the best solution possible is what has made our working relationship so successful.”

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compliance, we knew that wasn't the case and we were able to help Operation Lifesaver develop the processes needed to become complaint – using their existing infrastructure.”

Working closely with SystemLink, Operation Lifesaver began the transformation from what most would have considered a well-organized company, operationally, to become a more transparent, ultra-efficient organization financially. “Satisfying the DCAA requirements was a big undertaking for us; SystemLink held our hand thru the whole process and made sure we had the best solution,” said Carol.

“It meant Operation Lifesaver had to reorganize much of the way they structured their chart of accounts,” said Dave. “We had to re-design their financial management processes but they were able to leverage all of their existing tools. Thanks to our expertise with DCAA compliance, and the fact that several on our team are CPAs themselves, we were able to help Operation Lifesaver plan through a lot of their restructuring.”

In the end, Operation Lifesaver added Sage Project Job Costing to the existing Sage Accpac solution. “This new module allows them to track their costs by each program they receive funding for,” said Dave. “They are meeting their requirements set before them through DCAA and can have peace of mind that their system is operating the way it needs to.”

A Clear Crossing

The relationship with SystemLink proved invaluable as Operation Lifesaver sought compliance. The project was completed within the expected timeframe and Operation Lifesaver was soon fully-complaint. “SystemLink offers us their vast experience in accounting as well as software. Moreover, they have a complete understanding of what we need to be DCAA compliant. Their complete knowledge in these areas combined with their dedication to listening to our needs and going above and beyond to provide us with the best solution possible is what has made our working relationship so successful,” comments Carol.

“There are other, more costly compliance consultants out there,” said Dave. “Some vendors who offer to help companies achieve DCAA compliance really take advantage of the situation. They know that without DCAA compliance, their clients would lose all government business. They feel justified in charging exorbitant amounts because of the situation. We are happy to be able to provide companies like Operation Lifesaver with cost-effective ways to be compliant.”