BOOST FSMA COMPLIANCE POTENTIAL BY **UPGRADING FACILITY OPENINGS**

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The Food Safety Modernization Act was signed into law in 2011, and the final rules for preventative controls and produce safety were passed in 2015. The law was the largest food safety reform in more than 70 years and required companies involved in all stages of the food, beverage and dairy industries to think critically about their operations.

Much of the FSMA pertains to maintaining process equipment and ensuring facilities are in top condition through actions like inspections and repairs.

Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs) in general address tasks facility managers already perform, like regularly scheduled equipment and systems maintenance and ensuring all materials that come in contact with a products are nontoxic.

Preventative controls, on the other hand, are more tailored to specific facilities. The law requires business leaders to evaluate their own operations and identify any potential hazards that could result in unsafe working conditions or a substandard product. Once the hazard analysis is complete, they must record and implement strategies to minimize or eliminate those risks. The preventative controls may be everything from what to do when a recall is needed to specific cleanup duties in a facility.

COMPANIES MUST UNDERSTAND WHICH COMPLIANCE DATES AFFECT THEM

When the final rule was passed in 2015, companies weren't expected to change overnight. Compliance dates were spaced out over the course of several years for businesses of differing sizes to adhere to CGMPs and preventative control mandates. Larger companies, or those with more than 500 employees, were expected to be compliant with CGMPs by September 2016, and should have preventative controls in place by September 2017. Smaller companies are required to comply with CGMPs by September 2017 and preventative measures by September 2018.

Though some compliance dates have already passed and others are coming up quickly, inspections won't begin until September 2018. But this is no reason for companies to put off upgrading their facilities, equipment or practices. The sooner a company is compliant, the better. These rules were created for a reason: to ensure product safety across the food industry.

Meeting these requirements means that a company's facility is in the best position to keep food, beverages and dairy-based products safe for human and animal consumption.

Neglecting to bring facilities up to compliant standards could create undue consumer or employee risk.

It's also generally better to comply with new rules as soon as possible so your update project can be completed well before inspections take place.

KEEPING PESTS AWAY FROM THE FACILITY

One important area that facility managers should already have on their minds is pest control. Pests in your facility can lead to product contamination, endangering the health of consumers and employees. Securing entrances can prevent insect or rodent infestations in warehouses, distribution centers, manufacturing plants or any other areas where food is stored.

The first step in pest management is understanding how and where bugs or animals may enter a facility. The second is ensuring that potential entrance is secured against unwanted creatures.

An obvious potential entrance is the loading dock door. When a trailer is secured to the dock door, it should form a complete and impenetrable seal. Remember, if sunlight can get through a small crack in the seal, so can a gnat or other small insect. If the opening is large enough, bigger insects like beetles, and larger animals like birds, have been known to get into warehouses.

A number of dock sealing supplies can fix any imperfections, small or large, in a loading dock that is in use. A quality dock leveler offers more than an aligned surface to drive lift trucks over; it also blocks entry for opportunistic insects. Foam dock seals on the top, bottom and sides of the dock door frame further enclose the entrance from pests, as do brush seals on the pull chains.

A system of dock sealing products can also enhance the security of the warehouse.

Unsealed and unmaintained loading dock doors may provide a means of unauthorized entrance to warehouses for criminals who aim to steal or vandalize inventory, supplies or equipment.

KEEPING PESTS AWAY FROM THE FACILITY

While most exterior doors are generally kept closed, there are times when an open door is ideal for ventilation or to prepare for a shipment. Bug screens are ideal for this purpose.

Bug screens are made of industrial mesh that allow for 35 percent airflow. Bugs and birds are kept out, as are pollen, dust, sand and any other airborne contaminant. A foam cushion on the bottom ensures a seal between the screen and the floor.

On the other hand, there are entrances that must be kept closed as much as possible. High-speed doors are ideal in these instances. High-speed doors can move as fast as 100 inches per second. By opening and closing as quickly as possible, contaminants like animals, insects and pollutants don't have much opportunity to infiltrate the facility.

Air curtains are another tool that will allow a door to remain open without risking pest entrance. Air curtains are affixed to the top of a doorway and create a positive air flow that doesn't allow bugs to enter the facility.

The risk with air curtains, however, is that if they're installed incorrectly, they may do more harm than good. If a negative air flow is established instead of a positive one, bugs may actually get sucked into the facility. To avoid this issue, it's important to seek the expertise of installers who are trained and experienced in properly setting up air curtains.

MAINTAINING IMPORTANT BARRIERS IN INTERNAL DOORWAYS

Exterior entrances aren't the only areas where effective barriers must be installed and maintained. Warehouses, especially those in the food and beverage supply chain, are complex buildings with many rooms and sections. Adjacent areas may require vastly different standards of sanitation, temperature, humidity or other factors. In these instances, a regular door often isn't enough to keep the facility up to code.

Specialty doors are typically turned to when a specific temperature must be maintained in a food storage or manufacturing facility, where products must be kept frozen or chilled at a specific temperature. It could also apply to pharmaceutical settings where medications require certain conditions like a particular humidity level or temperature as well.

Freezer and cooler doors are heavily insulated to prevent loss of cool air as well as to avoid warm air from the outside impacting the conditions within the room.

Heavy-duty closed-cell polyurethane insulation wrapped in multiple layers of vinyl provide highly effective insulation.

HIGH SPEED DOORS MAINTAIN COOL AIR

The right door with effective insulation also helps keep costs low. Refrigerating an entire warehouse room isn't cheap, and losing any cold air to an adjacent area is a loss. Plus, when refrigeration units work harder to maintain cool temperatures (due to continuous permeation of warm air), the unit is more likely to wear out faster. Even with regular maintenance, the life span of an overworked refrigeration system is significantly shorter than those operating within properly insulated rooms.

High-speed doors are another option for facility managers who need to determine how to maintain a consistently low temperature for one area of their building.

The quick movement reduces the amount of cooled air lost to the outside. High-speed doors can be made from a variety of materials and still be effective. For example, high-speed fabric roll-up doors make for an easy-to-use entrance that's also highly insulative.

A common concern in refrigeration units is frost buildup. Too much frost can become a disruptive and cumbersome barrier that's tough to get rid of. Frost that melts creates a slip hazard. Luckily, heated doorframes eliminate this challenge. The frame is heated so frost doesn't form, but not so much that it takes away from the cooling efforts of the refrigeration unit.

CALL MINER TO KEEP YOUR FACILITY COMPLIANT WITH THE FSMA

As the deadline to upgrade facilities quickly approaches, managers must take measures to ensure their operations are compliant. If there is any possibility that pests can enter a facility, or that sanitation or climate standards aren't being upheld, there's a chance that product can spoil or become contaminated. It's important to reduce these risks as much as possible. Updating important facility infrastructure like doorways and keeping employees informed about new procedures or policies are two key steps in becoming compliant and reducing hazards.

When updating and installing new equipment or systems, it's essential that they are set up properly and a planned maintenance schedule is determined. This schedule will improve the equipment's life span and ensure that any problems are addressed immediately before they become larger issues that affect a facility's compliance status.

Reach out to Miner to learn what types of upgrades will be most suited to your operation, and to ensure your new FSMA friendly fixtures are installed correctly.