

Advancing Lab Safety Towards Excellence

How Research Safety Services at UCI incorporated the RSS inspection solution into their redesigned lab safety program

Challenge:

When Research Safety Services at UC Irvine evaluated their safety program, several gaps were found in lab safety which were hindering their safety goals.

- The database for lab inspections and findings was outdated with low tech reporting capabilities, and pulling reports was a labor intensive process that made it difficult to track open findings.
- A lack of clear processes such as a loosely defined escalation procedure created inconsistencies when managing findings to completion.
- The goal of inspecting labs at three-year intervals was not always met and some labs were missed altogether.



Photo credit UCI Research Safety Services

Solution:

Determined to redesign their lab safety program, UCI Research Safety Services partnered with groups in the UC safety community including UC Center for Laboratory Safety at UCLA, UC Davis EH&S, UCI Office of Research, UCI Lab Safety Committee, the UCI Team, and Risk and Safety Solutions. The collaboration of these teams proved to be key to UCI's immense success.

Risk and Safety Solutions' (RSS) role was to provide its inspection solution and the expertise of the dedicated RSS Customer Success Team who gave guidance and support before, during, and after the rollout to ensure an easy transition for the UCI faculty. Using the RSS inspection solution allowed Research Safety Services to define processes for quality control and priority escalation, provide clear communication to Principal Investigators (PIs), and establish program performance metrics.



Benefits:

- **Customized Priority Levels and Due Dates:** Checklist items can be assigned different priority levels with custom due dates so that EH&S subject matter experts can follow up with the lab to quickly address any high-priority concerns.
- **Built-in Management Review:** Inspections can be reviewed by a manager prior to being sent to the inspected party to ensure that each inspection meets established quality control criteria.
- **Automated Reminders:** Reminder notification emails about findings are sent to PIs at set intervals, and PIs have a centralized online location for managing their inspections.
- **Better Lab Engagement:** Safety Coordinators are associated with labs in the system and can assist and communicate with PIs while monitoring the progress of corrective actions.
- **Easy Performance Monitoring:** Performance reports can be easily accessed and custom reports can be created using the analytics feature so that leadership can gauge program success and adjust as needed.



Photo credit UCI Research Safety Services

Results:

- **Increased Efficiency:** In the first eight months of their new program, Research Safety Services inspected 100% of labs (466 total).
- **Escalation to Resolution:** An escalation process was created to address unresolved high priority findings based around the ability to give findings priority levels in the RSS inspection solution.
- **Standard Process for Inspections:** Developed a highly trained inspection team and leveraged the inspection solution to help define specific inspection standards and processes.
- **Leadership Engagement Review:** Inspection findings and safety trends for campus research are reviewed by the Vice Chancellors and School Executive Management quarterly and bi-annually thanks to easily prepared scorecard reports created using the inspection solution analytics.
- **Improved Safety through Program Cohesion:** Dramatic improvement in faculty and school buy-in for improving safety conditions in their labs.
- **Reduced IT Maintenance:** The previous inspection system, originally built and maintained in-house, was retired. The new inspection solution, which is hosted, maintained, and supported by RSS, is used for all new lab safety inspections.

