

Case study

“The BRCGS Standard was a good fit and complemented our existing quality management system.”

Heidi Good, Southeastern Container



Southeastern Container

Providing products, services and packaging solutions to meet the packaging needs of the Coca-Cola bottling community

The BRCGS Standard for Packaging and Packaging Materials was introduced by BRCGS Standards in conjunction with the Institute of Packaging in 2001 and is designed to help packaging manufacturers comply with food safety requirements and demonstrate due diligence. It was the first packaging Standard to be benchmarked by the GFSI.

We spoke to Heidi Good of Southeastern Container, a US P.E.T. bottle manufacturer, about why they chose the BRCGS Standard, the challenges they faced in implementing it, and achieving an 'A' grade certification.

Why did your company decide to pursue certification to the BRCGS Standard for Packaging and Packaging Materials?

Our customer required that we hold food safety certification. At the time, there weren't many options for packaging. We put a team together to complete our due diligence by talking with certification bodies and attending seminars.

The BRCGS Standard was a good fit and complemented our existing quality management system. It fits remarkably well with our company core values and culture of the company. It all looked daunting in the beginning; however, the local facility studied the Standard line by line, interpreted it and developed documents, policies and procedures as they went along.

How did the implementation program proceed?

In the beginning we decided to get one facility certificated in the first year and then to move on to the remaining plants. The first site chosen was our Effingham, Illinois facility, which started producing bottles in 1995. It's a typical steel framed, metal manufacturing facility operating 24/7.

Two different certification bodies carried out two separate gap assessments after which the gaps were evaluated, as were the certification bodies. The gap assessments were both beneficial for us to really see exactly how the process works and to verify our initial decision about moving forward with BRCGS.

What was the outcome of your first audit?

The Effingham facility was certificated with a grade 'A' in December 2011. The local plant personnel, corporate personnel and representatives from other facilities were present for the audit.

After the audit in Effingham, we brought personnel from all the facilities to Effingham to train on the Standard and our learnings. A commitment was made at that point to gain consistency at all our facilities.

BRCGS Certificated

6 manufacturing sites



Did your facilities have any particular problems or concerns when implementing the requirements?

Each facility has had its struggles but the biggest challenge for us as a company was the glass and brittle plastic registry requirement. This was a huge change for us. Looking back that seems almost silly but that was difficult for us.

And has the Standard impacted on your day-to-day activity?

We had always conducted internal audits in each facility but today we have transformed the internal audits into a day-to-day tool that tests the policies and procedures we have put into place. The audits put a daily focus onto continuous improvement from senior management to production team members.

Did you use any guidance support such as the BRCGS Standards enquiries inbox or the Interpretation Guidelines?

Yes, we purchased the Interpretation Guidelines and the Internal Audit Best Practice Guideline as well as some training from the IFSQ called 'Food Packaging Hygiene: Raising the Standard'. We have also attended many food safety conferences including the BRCGS Standards Americas conference.

Would you recommend the BRCGS Standard to other sites?

We were engaged in food safety activities without realising what we were doing until we started evaluating the schemes available to us. Quality and safety is part of the foundation of our company. I can state without a doubt, however, that becoming certificated to the BRCGS Standard has made us so much better day in and day out. The upfront time, effort and financial investment is so beneficial in the long run. The facility is cleaner and safer, our employees are more involved and happy and our customers have

benefited as well. We embarked on this journey with a very open mind, hopeful that we would reap some benefit. We couldn't imagine our business without BRCGS Standards at this point!

I would definitely recommend BRCGS Standards. The Standard is well written and easy to understand and interpret. The organisation is always on top of issues and looking ahead instead of staying with the status quo. The people within BRCGS Standards are top notch, very knowledgeable and helpful. Resources are plentiful but most importantly, BRCGS Standards actually strives to help companies succeed.

About Southeastern Container

Southeastern Container Inc. was formed in 1982 as a privately owned company under the ownership of a group of Coca-Cola Bottling companies. Today it produces plastic "P.E.T." bottles to meet the packaging needs of its customers across the Coca-Cola bottling community. The company has 6 manufacturing sites in 5 states and supplies bottles to Coca-Cola bottling plants in thirty-four states and six provinces in Canada. To find out more visit www.secontainer.com.

About BRCGS

BRCGS Standards is a leading global brand and consumer protection organisation, and a provider of safety and quality standards programmes for food manufacture, packaging, storage and distribution, consumer products, agents and brokers and retail.

Our standards are generated with the help of technical specialists, retailers, manufacturers and certification bodies from around the world so everything is rooted in practicality, rigour and clarity. We also offer comprehensive support to help new and established businesses achieve their quality and safety aims.

