

GAP Training Session: Writing an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)

Wythe Morris, ANR Agent
Commercial Horticulture
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Well written standard operating procedures...

- Provide direction
- Improve communication
- Reduce training time
- Improve work consistency

“Standard operating procedures used in combination with planned training and regular performance feedback lead to an effective and motivated workforce.”

Formats for SOP's

- **“Simple Steps”**- Ten steps or less
- **Hierarchical Steps**- Easy to use steps for experienced users and more detailed substeps for beginners.
- **Graphic** (flowchart)- Breaks long processes into subprocesses with fewer steps.

SOP Titles

Use for all formats...

Farm Name: _____

Doc. No. _____

Title: _____

Effective Date: _____

Developed by: _____

SOP Titles

Use for all formats...

Farm Name: Smith Produce Farm

Doc. No. SOP-01

Title: Sanitation of Crop Spray Water

Effective Date: January 1, 2010

Developed by: John Smith and Spray Crew

Developing the SOP

- Plan for results– have a goal in mind
- First Draft
 - Select a format
 - Watch someone do the activity
 - Write down everything that they do
 - This is your first draft
- Internal Review
 - Ask coworkers to review and suggest changes
 - Suggest changes that will make it easier to understand, more accurate or will improve performance

Developing the SOP, ctd.

- **External Review**
 - Tap the expertise of your neighbors, coworkers or other gowers
 - Use your advisors- extension, specialists, business associates
 - Revise to include the input that you have received
- **Test**
 - Have someone to test the procedure by performing each step exactly as it is described in the procedure
 - Revise any steps that cause confusion or hesitation

Developing the SOP, ctd.

- **Post**
 - Make a final draft of the procedure and post in the appropriate workplace location, possibly laminated or protected.
 - Keep an additional copy in the Plan of Action manual under the SOP section.
- **Train**
 - Train or retrain everyone as necessary to follow the procedure exactly.
 - Share reasons “why” this needs to be followed.

The result of good SOP's is that everyone focuses their abilities on doing the best job possible with the farm's resources.

SOP Activity for GAP training

- Given an outline of the “simple steps” format, fill in the title section using the directions given in this presentation
- Watch the instructor as he/she demonstrates the proper procedure for washing hands.
- Write down the steps as you see them occur
- Compare your notes with your neighbor
- As the class discusses the steps, edit your first draft.
- *You have just completed a SOP that can be used in your GAP Plan of Action manual.*
- Save this and other SOP's that you and the class develop for your POA manual.

Questions ??

Credits for this presentation:

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES:

A Writing Guide

**By Richard Stup, Senior Extension Associate
Human Resources, Penn State Dairy Alliance
Penn State University**

Wythe Morris, ANR Agent
Commercial Horticulture
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Email: morrisw@vt.edu