

SAFETY IS OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

BY TAKAHARU “TIM” KAWAHARA

As I begin my third year leading Kuraray America, Inc., I am most proud of the work we’ve done to strengthen our operations to make them more safe, stable, and sustainable.

To succeed in today’s modern industry, I believe we must each make safety a top priority. The Kuraray Group is built on the principles of safety, quality, respect for individuals, and commitment to our customers. Since joining Kuraray more than 35 years ago, I’ve seen these philosophies woven into every aspect of our operations. As a company, we don’t just prioritize safety; it’s one of Kuraray’s Guiding Principles, and Safety is the cornerstone of everything we do.

EVERYONE IS A SAFETY LEADER

Central to our safety culture is the concept that everyone is a “safety leader.” Each employee at Kuraray understands that they are responsible and accountable for their safety and how it affects those around them. Regardless of role, everyone takes part in a variety of safety training each year. I see safety as a continuous journey with no destination. I know we must continue to focus on leading indicators and make adjustments as we see trends starting to arise. Based on our findings so far, we have formed various Process Safety Element Champion Teams to address the mindset, training, and systems needed to help us continue to operate safely. By using proactive measures such as this, we can identify potential risks and take preventative actions so that we can continue to meet the goals of our 5 Zeros – zero employee injuries, contractor injuries, severity rating process safety incidents, offsite impact environmental incidents, and fire/security incidents.

As a company, we also encourage employees to think of safety as a lifestyle, not just at work but also in their everyday lives, whether they’re with their family, participating in hobbies, or driving down the road. Safety isn’t just a box to check; it’s a mindset that we must carry with us everywhere we go.

STABLE MEANS SAFE

During my time as the leader of Kuraray America, I have reiterated the importance of stable operations and what that means for the safety of our employees. By streamlining our processes and emphasizing stability, we are working each day to create a safer atmosphere. Through regular maintenance and turnarounds, we invest in our facilities and equipment to address any minor issues before they become major issues. When they are running more smoothly, we can minimize that factor in the equation and allow ourselves to focus solely on the safety component of our operations. We use the 5S methodology, which originated in Japan – sort, set in order, shine, standardize, and sustain. This system aims to organize the workplace, streamline processes, and eliminate potential hazards. Our commitment to stability reduces the risk of incidents but also enhances our overall efficiency and productivity.

EMBRACING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

As the world continues to change, so must we. I understand the importance of embracing digital transformation and how it can improve safety across our manufacturing processes by enabling proactive maintenance, real-time monitoring, advanced training, compliance management, data analysis, and emergency preparedness. We are currently transforming permitting and Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) systems into digital processes. This will ensure that our safety protocols from site to site are consistently followed, reducing the risk of errors or oversights. It will also streamline the approval process and reduce paperwork, allowing employees to focus more on critical thinking, innovation, and their mental well-being. We recently implemented an AI-based surveillance program where we are using drones to fly over our sites to monitor activity. This may be critical in the event of an on-site emergency to gather more timely information to assist in response and mitigation efforts. Of course, our key focus will continue to be on



TAKAHARU “TIM” KAWAHARA
President and CEO
Kuraray America, Inc.

personal accountability, education, and fostering a people-centric safety culture. By leveraging digital technologies effectively, we are working to create a safer work environment for our employees and minimize the risk of incidents and injuries.

In closing, I would like to thank each of our employees and contractors for all that they do to keep Kuraray safe. By working together, we can continue to reinforce our company-wide commitment to safety excellence.

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