

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



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(SOP) – A PROCESS MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR THE GARMENT FACTORIES

Standard operating procedure (SOP) is not a new thing for the garment industry. SOP is well known and is widely used by many organized factories. SOP can be defined as a step-by-step written procedure about how to do a job that gives desired result and maintains consistency in results. SOP can also be defined as a checklist for the user (operator) who is going to do a particular job and it is a sure success method of doing a job.

More than just written instructions SOP can be also made using illustrations and flow charts. For some processes, factory only needs to provide detailed instructions to perform a task, where some processes required instruction as well as decision making based on result of intermediate steps. Factories always follow a procedure to do a task, but usually such procedures are either not standardized or not written. Now it is time to standardize procedures for all routine tasks in manufacturing processes and get things done right; first time; every time Importance of Standard Operating Procedures for Routine Tasks In a factory, managers, executives and workers do routine tasks using a procedure. Procedure used for doing a task or getting required result varies from person to person. Secondly, different procedure needs different products (materials) for the same result. To get the same result from a process employees need to do a job same way every time. To ensure that every time an operator follows the same method of doing a task, factory needs to set up a standard procedure for operating a task and follow all standard procedures. There are number of benefits and improvement potential while a factory set SOP for their processes and sub-processes. Major benefits of having SOPs and following those SOPs include :

- 1. Consistency in result:** As said on the

above when SOP is followed factory will get same result every time. Consistency would result in enhanced factory performance and even if a person doing the job is changes; result would remain the same. It does not matter who is doing the job, important thing is operators should use standard procedures.

2. Right Quality First time:

Organizations aim not just to produce a product but a quality product. When standard procedures are followed, desired result would come at the end of the process. Use of SOP reduces the chance of making mistakes for common errors. Right first time quality production has its own number of other benefits.

3. Better concentration on work rather than asking every time how to do the job.

A well written SOP set for processes and sub-processes, gives direction to operators how to do a given task and how things will go. When there are no clear instructions and procedures, operators may follow wrong procedure and do mistakes. On the other hand managers don't need to prepare list of comments in every meetings and give instructions to their supervisors and executives. Everyone can concentrate on the task, instead of meetings for setting procedures every day.

4. Reduced process delay: As SOP contains detailed step by step procedure of doing a task, operator does not need to think before starting a task. Operators



SOP at knitting unit of Maral Overseas, Indore.

do not need to wait for work instructions from their managers. Operator can keep them busy in work and complete the task faster.

5. Self explained methods: SOP makes it easy to train employees in new process. It will also be easy for newcomers to learn the procedures and attain objectives. Also HODs do not need to remind precautions to their subordinates while delegating works every time.

6. Minimizes miscommunication:

Garment industry is considered as an unorganized industry. In this industry small number of professionals who can communicate effectively. A well written SOP can improve the communication gap between supervisor and workers, Managers to supervisors etc. and minimize miscommunication in work instruction and training.

7. Work place Safety: Work place must be safe for employees. A SOP written for how to operate a machine improves safety

of the workers.

Example

A SOP of a sewing department of a Bangalore based export house is shown below as an example. In this SOP there are work instructions for line supervisors and checklist for the department. The above SOP can be extended further by including detailed instructions. SOPs needs to be displayed near the workstation and should be readable to the concerned person. SOP should be written in local language or if required in multiple languages.

- ⊗ Line to be set as per line layout plan prepared by IE.
- ⊗ Operations to be assigned to operators as per their skill level.
- ⊗ All cutters or scissors should be tied with machines and tables for safety point of view.
- ⊗ Required SPI, thread tension and needle no. must be checked by supervisors and mechanic as per requirement prior to start of sewing style change.
- ⊗ Line in-charge or line supervisor needs to give work instruction to the operators. And method of working an operation must be explained to each operator.
- ⊗ QA, in-line QC and in-line checkers ascertain whether the quality coming out from each operation is as per the quality specification or instruction.
- ⊗ No workstation would be given a go ahead for production till the time outgoing quality of that workstation is approved.
- ⊗ If there is any specific quality problem, the QA Executive must inform about the same to the line in-charge and supervisor to bring about quick corrective action.
- ⊗ A report is maintained by the in-line checkers and online QC for style quality progress.
- ⊗ After line setting, Industrial Engineers must study each operation. If any change needs in lay out and working method for quality and production purpose, immediate action to be taken.
- ⊗ At the end of line, stitched garments need to be checked by final checkers to ensure the product quality.
- ⊗ Passed garments from final checking must be audited by QA as per 2.5 AQL systems.
- ⊗ Passed garments to be sent to finishing department through standard documentation process.