



ISEA members are leaders in safety equipment manufacturing, testing and application, and are united in the goal of protecting workers worldwide. Each quarter, we'll highlight a member company.

Saf-T-Gard International is an ISEA member company you need to know.



1. How long has your company been in the health and safety industry?

2017 marks the 81st anniversary for Saf-T-Gard International, Inc., a family-owned and operated global supplier of industrial safety products now in its 4th generation of ownership. Since its establishment in 1936, Saf-T-Gard has enabled on-the-job safety, compliance and peace of mind for hundreds of thousands of workers and their families by delivering superior safety products and solutions that protect against work-related hazards and prevent serious injuries.

Founded as Latex Glove Manufacturing Company by Leo and Lillian Rivkin, the company began its operations in Chicago when the Rivkins acquired equipment from a balloon company and used it to produce waterproof, rubber-coated cotton gloves. Norman, their son, was in high school at the time. In 1939, they moved to a factory loft where they stayed until 1942, when the company was virtually destroyed by a fire, which started in a neighboring printing plant. After salvaging what little they could, Leo and Lillian reopened their business shortly

thereafter. In the 1940s, as Chicago manufacturers geared up to support the American war efforts, Latex Glove Company expanded its product offering as a full-line industrial glove distributor.

In 1945, Norman Rivkin returned from military service and used his war-time savings to buy a small leather palm glove factory. This meant moving the company to a much larger, four-story building on the Near North Side of Chicago. The distribution business operated on the first floor, while leather palm gloves were manufactured on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors. Around 1956, leather glove manufacturing was discontinued and the equipment sold. Latex Glove's distribution business expanded to utilize the entire building. After Leo Rivkin passed away in 1964, Norman Rivkin took control of all facets of the business.

The focus on occupational safety and health in the 1960s and 1970s led to an increased emphasis on providing a full line of personal protective equipment. As such, Latex Glove Company began supplementing its legacy of hand protection with industrial safety products from global suppliers, including protective eyewear, respirators, hard hats, protective clothing and footwear and first aid kits and supplies to meet OSHA's requirements. In 1970, Norman's son, Richard, joined the company. To provide the facility for further growth and better customer service, Latex Glove purchased a much larger building in Northbrook, Illinois, a suburb 35 miles north of downtown Chicago in 1979.

In the early 1980s, Saf-T-Gard's Voltgard® Test Lab was launched with the mission to develop the electrical testing and utility industry business by providing the testing of rubber insulating products to complement the sales of new products. By 1989, the company's direction as a full-line, quality-oriented supplier of safety products was clear, and therefore, Latex Glove Company changed its name to Saf-T-Gard International, Inc. to reflect its dedication to a complete line of worker safety products and personal protective equipment. In late 1994, Norman relinquished operating control to Richard, but remained as a consultant. In 1999, the tradition continued with the 4th generation when Richard's son, Loren, joined Saf-T-Gard and is currently Executive Vice President.

In 1994, Saf-T-Gard was honored as Illinois Family Business of the Year.

In 1999, then Secretary of Commerce William Daley visited Saf-T-Gard and presented the company with the President's E-Award for Export Excellence.

In 2005, Richard joined his father Norman in the IGA (International Glove Association) Hall of Fame. Norman was a founder of NIGDA (National Industrial Glove Distributors Association) which became IGA, and was in the inaugural Hall of Fame Class of 1989.

Today, Saf-T-Gard and its Voltgard division carry on the tradition that was started more than 80 years ago: bringing customers the products, training and service that they need to keep employees safe in the workplace. Saf-T-Gard has customers in all 50 states and in more than 50 countries around the world representing a broad range of industries from die casters to telecommunications companies, and food processors to the United States Government, ranging in sizes from Fortune 20 companies to 2-person smaller businesses. Saf-T-Gard is an active member of the National Safety Council, International Safety Equipment Association and the Safety Marketing Group. Saf-T-Gard's Voltgard Test Lab has grown to be the largest, independent, NAIL4PET-accredited test lab for rubber insulating products in the United States.

Our Mission:

To provide, based on our experience, expertise and understanding of our customer's requirements, solutions to their needs for industrial safety products and personal protective equipment of the finest world-class quality, appropriate and suitable for the purposes intended, that provide value, safety and security.

2. What's the biggest challenge you see facing the safety equipment industry?

The increasing commoditization of workers and their safety products. Oftentimes, this commoditization is spurred by the buying, selling, merging and dissolving of companies, as new ownership frequently looks at the safety industry as just another set of numbers on a balance sheet without understanding the people behind the numbers. While there are no laws or regulations that require businesses to

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have a "Culture of Safety", there are laws and regulations setting minimum safety standards for businesses, products and services. However, that is only an impersonal minimum. Mere compliance does not address the true place of safety as a culture in an organization. The "uncultured" seek the cheapest products that may satisfy the regulatory compliance issue. We sometimes refer to this as the Race to Zero – "Mr. Customer, you are buying safety glasses for \$0.80, but we can offer them to you for \$0.75." A "Culture of Safety" is so much more. It starts with the human element and incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach that involves employees (the front line of safety) and analyzes all aspects of injury prevention, productivity impact and risk management.

Additionally, there is the issue of "disintermediation". Many years ago, some consultants predicted that traditional specialty distributors would be put out of business by the removal of intermediaries in the supply chain. The theory then was that an integrated supply company could reduce costs by streamlining the supply chain, such as applying the same expertise to delivering safety products as to delivering fasteners or abrasives or plumbing supplies. Today, the same consultants who tried to scare specialty distributors back then are now painting a picture of the big bad wolf on Amazon.com and similar internet sellers.

3. How is your company adapting to the challenge?

For starters, Saf-T-Gard never loses sight of the fact that the first P in PPE (personal protective equipment) stands for "personal". We don't believe that our customers are just a number. Rather, our customers depend on us to provide the products and services that enable workers to go home safe after every work day, and that is personal. We are passionate about the products we offer and the manufacturers and brands that we represent. Our safety products are not just another commodity coming out of a 2,000+ page catalog and packed in a white box like light bulbs or copy paper. We will supply no product that, based on our experience and expertise, is not suitable for the purpose intended.

Moreover, the training and learning

never stops for the Saf-T-Gard team! As a member of the International Safety Equipment Association, many of our employees have earned the Qualified Safety Sales Professional (QSSP) designation. Furthermore, our sales staff continually participates in ongoing application training as well as intensive new product training provided regularly by our Safety Marketing Group (SMG) partners and other supplier partners. That being said, Saf-T-Gard is highly selective about the new products we offer. All new products are evaluated against various criteria including whether or not the product was designed to address a specific hazard or need in the industrial workplace.

Saf-T-Gard's training also extends to delivering safety solutions. No integrated supply house or Amazon.com or big-catalog-little-expertise company can perform an on-site hazard analysis, fit-test workers for respirators or calibrate gas detection instrumentation. Our reps will work with the customer's team to evaluate operations, applications and hazards and sort through literally thousands of products to recommend solutions that enhance safety and productivity in a cost-effective manner. We believe the most important channel for distribution of industrial safety products is the professional safety products supplier who brings knowledge, experience and expertise as the value-added proposition.

Consequently, the real payoff comes in recognizing that the professional safety distributor invests significant resources in people, product knowledge, training, understanding of regulatory compliance, back-end and fulfillment systems and inventory to be a true partner in fostering a "Culture of Safety".

4. Finally, what's a memorable story of how PPE saved your customer's life?

Many in the PPE business tell feel-good stories of how the products that they sell help make sure that the workers that wear the products get to come home safely to their families each day. That is a heavy responsibility. Selling glasses to protect the eyes of a new dad so he can come home and see his new baby. Selling cut-resistant gloves to protect the hands of a mom so she can come home and practice math with her 3rd grader. Most ISEA members can tell these stories, and Saf-T-Gard can too. These are examples of PPE that can

keep workers safe from possible or likely hazards on the job.

Saf-T-Gard and our Voltgard Test Lab provide and test products that keep people safe (and are required) so the person can do the job. Rubber insulating gloves are used by utility linemen so that they can use their hands to touch power lines carrying 17,000 volts of electrical current. Not to minimize other work-related injuries, but the impact of the lack of/faulty use or failed equipment with a lot of PPE is a trip to the emergency room. With electrical safety and rubber insulating gloves, the lack of/faulty use or failed equipment results in death.

At Saf-T-Gard, the technicians in our test lab take this responsibility very seriously. They are trained to inspect in-service rubber insulating products with the same care that they would if it was their family member who was using it. Our technicians know that these gloves are being worn by highly-skilled workers to repair down power lines or upgrade electrical infrastructure. Making sure to remove any rubber insulating products that could fail from the field is a heavy responsibility, as not doing so could jeopardize the life of the workers wearing them. So, every day at Saf-T-Gard our team is working with PPE for our customers that will save a life.

Visit Saf-T-Gard at: www.saftgard.com

VISIT THE ISEA BUYERS GUIDE FOR A LIST OF PPE MANUFACTURERS IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

- Dropped Objects Solutions
- Emergency Eyewash and Shower Group
- Eye and Face Protection Group
- Fall Protection Group
- First Aid Group
- Hand Protection Group
- Head Protection Group
- Hearing Protection Group
- Heat Stress Solutions
- High Visibility Products Group
- Instruments
- Protective Apparel Group
- Respiratory Protection Group