

Lean Training Saves Taxpayer Dollars at Maine Military Authority Repair Facility

Improved Efficiency Helps Maine Center Compete for Work, Preserve Jobs

Augusta, Maine: In the 20 years since the closure of Loring Air Force Base disrupted the communities of northern Aroostook County, the fate of the region's economy has depended on the development of new employers on the former base. One of the most successful of those initiatives has been the creation of the Maine Military Authority (MMA), which has grown to employ approximately 360 employees in Limestone. Established in 1997, the military authority maintains, rebuilds and repairs military vehicles and equipment for the National Guard Bureau and the Department of Defense.

The Maine Military Authority has succeeded because of its ability to successfully compete for contracts. Recognizing that it could continue to improve its performance by implementing Lean methodologies, MMA sought the assistance of the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership ([Maine MEP](#)) to implement Lean at the Limestone facility.

After meeting with senior MMA managers, Maine MEP Project Manager Brian Sutherland proposed a two-step strategy. First, apply for grant funding that Sutherland believed could help the Military Authority with the cost of the training; then launch a series of training exercises and Lean initiatives to identify areas of possible improvement. Working with colleagues at the Northern Maine Development Commission, Sutherland assisted MMA in successfully applying for a grant from the Defense Logistics Agency.

"Maine MEP's success in helping us secure grant funding was a critical step in getting the Lean training initiative off the ground. From the outset, we recognized that Lean could help us achieve process improvements. With funding to support the cost of the training, the potential value of the project became even more evident," said Mark Bouchard, director of quality at the Maine Military Authority.

The project began with training exercises that introduced Lean methodologies to 55 MMA employees. Project teams then used Value Stream Mapping techniques to follow processes from start to finish and identify wastes in different areas of the facility. Kaizen events and other strategies were then employed to identify strategies for streamlining processes, cutting waste and improving efficiencies.

MMA Quality Director Mark Bouchard noted that it took some time to overcome the initial reluctance of employees to change the way things were done.

"It was a little tough at first to get Lean introduced into the organization," Bouchard stated. "I relate that to people's natural resistance to change. After our management team received Lean introductory training from MEP, the concepts of Lean began to unfold, and we were on our way. I knew that Lean was becoming accepted when one of our supervisors who had participated in an earlier event asked to be considered for future events."

The Lean initiative achieved impressive results. An estimated \$600,000 was saved through process improvements and cost avoidance as a result of the Maine MEP training.

"The Maine Military Authority's success in Limestone has been due to the ingenuity and work ethic of its employees," said Maine MEP Operations Manager Rosemary Presnar. "This project demonstrates the kind of impact that Lean can have by focusing the employees on continuous improvement. By bringing together Lean project teams to brainstorm ways of cutting waste, the MMA saved \$600,000 in operating costs. That directly translates into increased competitiveness, preserving jobs that are key to the northern Maine economy."

MMA managers praised effort of Maine MEP

“MMA has always worked in an efficient manner. But the Lean training we received has allowed us to take our efficiency to a new level,” Bouchard said. “We’re very pleased with the services provided by Maine MEP and look forward to working with them again in the future.”

About Maine Military Authority

Maine Military Authority was established in 1997 to operate the Maine Readiness Sustainment Maintenance Center (MERSMS) to maintain, rebuild, repair and store military vehicles and equipment for the National Guard Bureau and the U.S. Department of Defense. MMA was the first High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle rebuilding site in the United States. The site has performed complete refurbishment of the five-ton trucks, bridge boats, mobile kitchen trailers and a wide variety of engineering equipment.