

HAZSIM CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

COLLEGE PROFESSOR & OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY EXPERT JESSICA JORDAN

When it comes to training the next generation of safety professionals, realistic and unpredictable scenarios are key.



Odessa Junior College in Texas typically has a student body of 16,000 and of those, 5,000 are enrolled in its occupational and technical courses. Many of those students will spend time with Jessica Jordan learning how to safely investigate and mitigate hazmat situations. Jordan is an associate professor and chair of the Occupational Safety and Environmental Technology Department. But she didn't set out 27 years ago with the intent of educating the next generation of safety professionals. **"I didn't have a clue that this was actually a career"** she says.

When Jessica and her husband discovered the hard way that their start-up business had to appease regulatory agencies, she hit the books and she's been learning and sharing that knowledge ever since. Prof. Jordan sat down with Hazmat Nation to pass on some of her wisdom.

How did you wind up in this career?

My husband owned a small manufacturing firm. He made deliveries that required a 1-ton truck and a 40-foot gooseneck trailer. Yes, you see the picture forming — husband on the side of the road with blue and red flashing lights behind him. We didn't know at the time that his truck and trailer fell under DOT regulation, but I learned quickly what DOT was and where we fell in the grand scheme of things. Then, one of our employees was injured on the job and required stitches — workers' comp.. We were good, but I wondered what difference following OSHA would make for our small (less than 10) employee shop.

I started researching, reading, and learning everything I could about best practices. We made the changes — our employees loved it. So, when it came time to dispose of some chemicals and such, I never hesitated; I looked to EPA and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for guidance. Fast forward through years of education (associate's degree in OSHT), consulting and training, more education (bachelor's degree in OSH), working as a safety specialist for a Fortune 500 well-servicing company, more education (master's degree in OSH), and now, here I am teaching the next generation of safety professionals at our community college.



Who are your students?

I teach at the associates and bachelors level. We teach both face-to-face and online courses. A fun part about my job is that we have an early college high school (ECHS). So, I not only teach traditional college students, but I also have ninth through 12th grade students. **Our ECHS students are so much fun. They do not have the "we've always done it this way" ideas.** Showing them how to do a job, and finding the resources that allow them to safely explore industry is a very rewarding challenge.

How do you mix up training scenarios so they don't become predictable or stale?

OSHA provides me with many, many ideas but I also pull current events for training scenarios. Sadly, there are plenty to choose from.

What's the key to best preparing students to handle real scenarios outside of the controlled training environment?

Making their controlled training environment as realistic as possible has been an eye-opener for them. Using our HazSim trainers has added value — from alarms sounding to hissing propane tanks to bodies buried in a confined space rasping "help me" — it gives the students an edgy feeling. I have many comments about how it incites their fight-or-flight senses.



OSHA Education Center Host Training Organization at Odessa College sharing best practices.



Odessa College hosts an OSHA 511 for General Industry course.

What is your biggest obstacle when conducting training?

Not being able to set up the entire scene where the students have that real-world feeling. One day, I would like to grow my scenarios to a FEMA junior level drill.

What wicked training problem keeps you up at night?

Am I teaching them everything they need to know?

What would it take to solve it?

I don't know... maybe a state-of-the-art training facility (joking)?

Which devices do you rely on most for realistic training?

HazSim trainers are game-changers, the tanks, the dummy... I kill the dummy frequently.



As a hazmat instructor, what has been your biggest "ah-ha" teaching moment - the one that changed how you teach?

Seeing the spark in my students' eyes — because I am there in it with them — when they realize they are either (1) about to let me die, or (2) they kept me from dying. I like to create my scenarios where there is a "rest of the story." I don't want my students to ever slide into complacency of "what they see, is what it is." There could always be something under the surface.

What are the most surprising differences when teaching college students versus employees, and what lessons in instruction can be carried over from the college setting to make their training better?

The most surprising difference is how open college students are to trying more innovative ways to train. I honestly believe in giving them the opportunity to have training that is innovative — say, hands-on lock out/tag out in a controlled training environment that has an energy release nothing that hurts them, but that shocks them. Some type of release that makes them step back and say, "Oh, that could really have hurt me or someone else."