

Promoting safety in the workplace

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Safety programs minimize injuries, solidify good labor relations, save millions of dollars in fines and other costs, and improve our bargaining position in a competitive world marketplace.

We can all learn from others. In the area of safety, a number of programs are helping pulp, paper, and supplier industries protect their employees. According to William E. Johns, executive director, Pulp and Paper Safety Association, *the name of the game in accident prevention is awareness.*

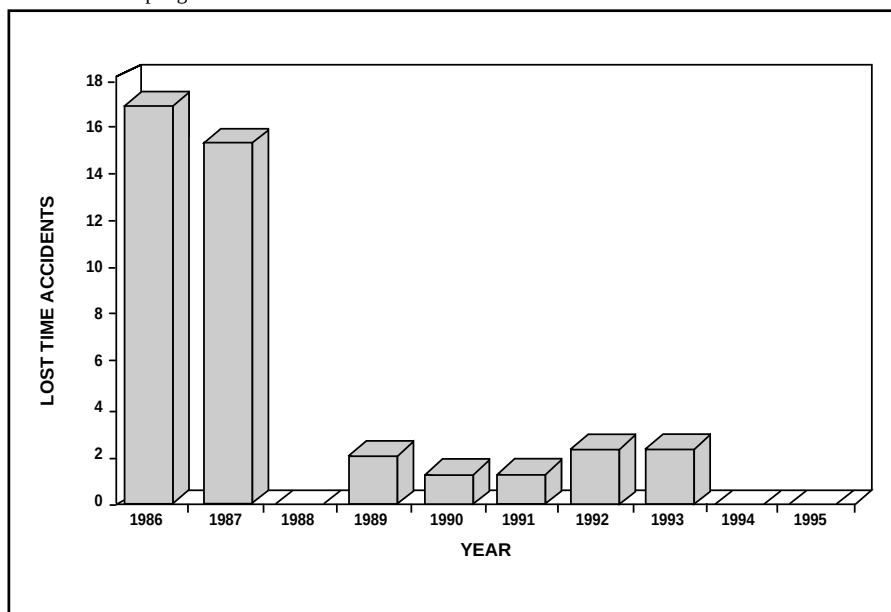
The success stories featured here serve as good examples of what can be achieved when safety in the workplace becomes a top priority. These organizations have shown not only a sensitivity to the safety issue, but also have put the philosophy into practice. Each organization—Weyerhaeuser's Barrington, NJ, plant; Avenor's Thunder Bay Mill in Ontario, Canada; and BE&K Construction Co. in Birmingham, AL—has implemented a safety program that works for them.

Common traits of these programs include a sharing of responsibility and empowerment to act to maintain safe plant or site conditions, continual training, and attention to accident prevention. Typically, the concept of safety is embedded in the culture, and a team spirit pervades the organization. There is interaction involving all employee levels and recognition for achieving goals. Distinctly different in operation, size and purpose, these three case studies show how each organization implemented its safety program and the benefits derived from the process.

STOP at Weyerhaeuser

Employees and supervisors of the Containerboard Packaging Division of Weyerhaeuser, Barrington, NJ, implemented the DuPont Safety Training Observation Program (STOP) in late 1987. At that time, the 185-member work force was skeptical. Now, after seven years, the STOP program has become an

1. LTAs have dropped dramatically at the Weyerhaeuser Barrington Plant since implementing the DuPont STOP program in late 1987.



integral part of the plant culture and each person's daily routine. Employees volunteer to serve on safety committees and rate the program as one of the best in the company, according to Janice Adams, human resource manager.

STOP is a behavior modification program that uses techniques such as self-study workbooks, videotapes, group discussions, and field audits. Much of the success with the program is attributed to commitment, consistency, and perseverance—at all levels.

The results at Barrington have been dramatic (Fig. 1). Just recently the plant celebrated the past two years without a lost time accident (LTA). Safety-related costs have also been drastically reduced from US\$ 0.30/work-hour in 1986 to less than US\$ 0.03/work-hour in 1994. Some of this money is now used for training rather than for claims.

Before implementing STOP, no one was responsible for safety. The program offers a structured process that forces total

Safety

Hearing protection and safety glasses with side shields protect a Weyerhaeuser employee on the job.



employee involvement. According to General Manager Ron McGuigan, "Safety is the top priority—higher in importance than quality or production."

Using the method of cascade teaching espoused by STOP, all managers, supervisors, and safety committee members are trained in the program's safety observation and auditing techniques. This approach makes each level of supervision responsible for teaching the observation techniques they have learned to the next level of supervision. Though everyone is responsible for safety at the site, the program is managed by a safety core group, which is made up of at least 12 employees representing both management and production.

The safety team consists of a core committee and six subgroups, including: hazards analysis, safety audits, building evacuation, health and wellness, housekeeping, and employee safety training. All subgroups use STOP safety techniques and meet regularly to discuss safety issues and progress. More than 50 employees are involved in the various subgroups.

All employees are responsible for conducting weekly STOP audits. Using STOP Safety Observation Cards as an auditing tool, employees put the observation techniques they have learned into action in a systematic way. STOP observation sites are located throughout the plant, stocked with blank observation cards for every employee to use. Completed cards are posted in these areas so that everyone can learn from the situation and apply the information to their own area.

To keep everyone up to date, a sign at the employee entrance records safety progress. As an added incentive, prizes are awarded to employees on a quarterly basis for no recordable injuries.

"In the past, our approach was threatening. Supervisors talked *to* and *at*, instead of *with* employees," said McGuigan. "Now, supervisors talk *with* employees daily. Using STOP's positive, interactive approach helps improve supervisory and communications skills and promotes a team effort toward safety," McGuigan added.

Avenor's Thunder Bay employees' dedication to safety earned them the 1994 "Safest Mill in Canada" plaque.



Avenor's attention to prevention

Avenor's Thunder Bay complex, situated on the Kaministiquia River in Ontario, is one of the largest pulp and paper mills in North America. It produces slightly less than 1 million metric tons/year of fully bleached kraft pulp and newsprint; 2400 rolls of newsprint and 6000 bales of kraft leaving its docks each day.

In 1991, Thunder Bay operated at a lost time injury rate of eight per 200,000 man-hours. Two men died and one was seriously injured in three separate industrial accidents at Thunder Bay that year. The accidents spurred management and union executives to commit to placing a stronger emphasis on safety. According to Bob Foley, superintendent of Occupational Health and Safety, management charged the Joint Health and Safety Committee to develop a training program, which focused on the principles of accident prevention and loss control. The committee wrote and implemented a specific set of health and safety standards based on the International Safety Rating System, which also provides a blueprint to develop the program and an audit system.

"We had two outside audits and we achieved an advanced Three-Star level," said Foley. The program covers 20 categories including safety systems management, training, investigation and reporting procedures, and emergency preparedness.

Initially, union and management trainers delivered the program to the 1500 Thunder Bay employees after all jobs were analyzed from safety, quality, and efficiency perspectives. Work-permit procedures standardize maintenance methods, thereby alerting the worker to the approved practice and the potential risk.

The mill, which operates around the clock, seven days a week, empowers its workers to take responsibility for their own safety. "We have an item in our corporate policy that says we will hold all employees responsible for quality safe work practices, but we'll provide all employees with the opportunity for meaningful involvement and participation in the development and implementation of each unit's accident prevention program, so we're trying to drive ownership for occupational health and safety deeper into the organization. We have a

OSHA's Star worksite banner is proudly displayed behind Iowa Governor Terry E. Branstad at the Cedar River Paper Co. site dedication.



trained knowledgeable base of about 130 volunteers,” Foley commented.

Training is continual. Management and union representatives take a six-day course on safety, which covers potential dangers at the plant and procedures to deal with accidents. Each week, small groups break to discuss mishaps and potential troublesome procedures in their area.

Awards for reaching safety goals have included sweatshirts proclaiming “Simply the Best,” screwdrivers, and binoculars. “Everyone receives the award, it’s a team effort,” said Foley. “In recognition of its reaching 1.5 million hours injury free, Thunder Bay made a generous donation on behalf of its mill workers to a local trauma center for the purchase of a Beta Medical stretcher,” he added.

The mill provides a fitness center on the premises with a full-time health and fitness specialist. Rehabilitation services and a modified work program allow injured workers to return gradually to their regular jobs.

In September 1994, *Pulp and Paper Canada* recognized Thunder Bay as the safest mill in Canada with a trophy when it achieved more than 2.5 million hours without a lost time accident—an incredible unmatched record! Thunder Bay Mill now has a stated goal to reach three million hours lost-time-injury-free.

BE&K achieves *Stardom* through OSHA

In June 1995, BE&K Construction Co., headquartered in Birmingham, AL, received an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star designation for its Cedar River Paper Co. construction project in Iowa—only the second Star site in Iowa, and its first in construction.

BE&K recognized in 1990 that the OSHA/VPP Star designation was an excellent way to encourage management and workers to improve safety. As a result, they worked to meet Star criteria, applied to OSHA, and got recognition as a construction Star site at the DuPont project in DeLisle, MS.

Currently, OSHA has only 140 Star sites across the United States and only two of these are active construction projects.

“During the evaluation, OSHA looks for strong employee involvement and employee-led activities that enhance safety, such as safety committees, safety inspections, tool box safety meetings, help with writing procedures, and participation in emergency response team activities,” said Rich Baldwin, BE&K’s safety director. OSHA also requires that the site incident rates be at or below the current industry averages.

To earn the Star designation, an organized and dedicated employee effort is required. OSHA must be able to review a year’s worth of documentation to determine if the site warrants Star certification and provides a self-assessment checklist, which is helpful to the organization’s application efforts. The checklist gives employees and managers an accurate and private scorecard to help in determining eligibility for the VPP and assists in identifying any areas that need improvement.

When OSHA agrees that the application indicates strong safety systems and employee involvement, as well as compliance with the VPP requirements, they will schedule a site evaluation. Typically, two to six OSHA evaluators will visit the site over a three- to four-day period and look at safety practices and paperwork. The first event is a thorough safety orientation followed by a presentation on the safety systems. The presentation is led by employees, not supervisory-level personnel. Formal, private, employee interviews follow to verify the employee’s understanding of safety and health rules. An informal walkthrough with evaluators allows the crew to correct any deficiencies noticed by the evaluators. OSHA also determines if management has provided sufficient support for accident prevention efforts.

“A closing conference is held between OSHA, the site employees, and management; and, at that time, we learn if we have succeeded in obtaining the evaluation team’s recommendation for Star status. The team’s recommendation goes to Washington for approval if we are in a federal OSHA plan state, or to the state officials,” Baldwin related. After the approval process is complete, OSHA dignitaries, or in the case of the state plans the governor or labor secretary, makes a formal presentation.

“After we received the award, our safety awareness and employee behavior blossomed. It’s like the quarterback who may not throw a perfect pass, but when he comes off the field the coach pats him on the shoulder and says, ‘hey, terrific job!’ and the next time they get the ball he scores on a long bomb. That’s the way it is with safety behavior. The Star process reinforces employees’ safe practices and builds a safety culture in an organization,” Baldwin remarked.

State OSHA plans, such as Iowa’s, can grant OSHA Star or Merit status, which is a level of safety proficiency beneath Star status. In federal OSHA plan states, only Construction Safety Excellence Demonstration status is available if the project is not already on a client Star or Merit site. No matter what the designation, the application process is the same.

Safety

“BE&K recognizes VPP criteria as a model for improving safety and health at all our job sites. The resulting reduction in injury and illness rates is impressive. And, since we’ve tailored our safety systems to that model, it’s easy for us to get the elite recognition from OSHA as Star or Construction Safety Excellence Demonstration sites. We started a large construction project at Stevenson, AL, for Mead, and since they are already a Merit site, we will make our application for Star in December,” Baldwin commented. “Even while the project was in the bid stage last spring, we were planning our safety systems to blend with OSHA’s VPP requirements.”

Contact information

Pulp and Paper Safety Association: With a current membership base of approximately 300 paper mills and other operating

units—and a Board of Governors which includes 50% mill safety directors and 50% corporate safety directors—this non-profit, non-political association provides professional development through networking, seminars, and an annual conference. It aims to increase its membership base to 1000 mills over the next few years with an aggressive plan to seek support of top paper industry executives as essential partners in safety. The Association will hold its 53rd Annual Conference in St. Petersburg, FL, May 26–29, 1996. For further information, telephone Bill Johns at (706) 234–1919.

DuPont Safety Training Observation Program: Contact Ceil Sheffy, telephone: (302) 773–4440 or fax: (302) 774–2135.

For more information on OSHA’s Voluntary Protection Programs, contact your local OSHA office. 

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