

Your Company's Reputation is On the Line

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I began my safety career in 1973. As a compliance officer, for my initial contact I would usually meet with a project superintendent and we would evaluate the job site. We would typically discover hazards that were violations of Oregon Safe Employment Act standards, which usually involved defective tools, lack of guard railing, open floor holes, and the lack of basic personal protective equipment.

As we would begin correcting the typical hazards, employees would be issued safety equipment, receive training in safe practices, and employers would develop safety policies and rules to cover general and site specific situations. If an employee was observed doing something unsafe, then the company's disciplinary policy would be used to address the issue.

So what could go wrong? The missing element was supervision on the site.

OR-OSHA rules are very specific about the responsibility of the person or persons in charge of a job. Middle management is an extension of the company's owner; the supervisor's knowledge of hazardous conditions represents the employer's knowledge of safety. Supervisors must receive a high level of safety training along with the authority to enforce existing safety rules.

I once visited a site where the safety practices were well defined, the employer invested many dollars in safety equipment and provided extensive training, but one thing lacking was the site's lead person's attention to safety enforcement. He was simply too busy to focus on it. The underlying cause of the problem was the company's need to hire a lot of people quickly and promote an adequately trained individual to foreman.

Employee misconduct is the responsibility of the supervisor to correct, and if it is observed during a compliance inspection, it will be documented as a situation that, with reasonable diligence, the employer could have known about. Repeated inspections revealing safety infractions could result in repeat or even willful violations of safety codes. It is not necessary for violations to be committed with a bad purpose or an evil intent to be deemed "willful."

Remembering that the manager, superintendent, foreman, or other person in charge or control of all or part of the place of employment is considered to be an agent of the employer, we must consider the potential adverse effects on the company's reputation. The information contained in an OSHA inspection and investigation is generally considered public record, but information that involves trade secrets or other confidential information is protected. Many project owners are reviewing OSHA files, so the next steps are worth serious consideration.

Assist middle management with their enhancement of safety concepts, and allow time for them to communicate and enforce your rules. Employees must be reminded often to strictly abide with the instructions given by the person in charge. Company owners must visit their sites to insure that their goals are being met.

Contact you're AGC safety and loss control consultant for assistance with training and site evaluations.

AGC Announces 2005 Recognition of Safety Excellence (ROSE) Awards

This year, eight AGC member companies received special recognition as ROSE Award recipients at the awards luncheon at the chapter's annual conference in late January. Our panel of judges

concluded that these award-winning firms are truly representative of the Oregon-Columbia Chapter, and were selected for their dedication and commitment to safety.

These companies set the example as safety leaders for AGC and the construction industry. Their programs include such components as management commitment and accountability, written safety and health programs and policies, demonstrated use of proven safety practices, regular job site safety inspections, active safety committees, employee involvement, employee training, and adherence to safety rules and regulations. Their attitudes and commitment to safety enhance their own business as well as the entire construction industry, and it shows.

The 2005 ROSE Award winners, and their respective categories include:

Emerick Construction Co. Building Division, under 100,000 work hours

Pence/Kelly Concrete, LLC Building Division, 100,001–300,000 work hours

Impregilo Healy JV Heavy Division, 300,001–700,000 work hours

Hamilton Construction Co. Highway Division, 100,001–300,000 work hours

LTM Incorporated Highway Division, 700,001–1 million work hours

Reitmeier Mechanical Specialty Division, under 100,000 work hours

New Tech Electric, Inc. Specialty Division, 100,001–300,000 work hours

E C Company Specialty Division, over 1 million work hours

Hamilton Construction Co. was selected by the judging panel as the company that demonstrated an exceptional program and presentation, earning the special honor as recipient of the chapter's Outstanding Safety Award.

The chapter also nominated the eight ROSE Award winners for AGC of America's Construction Safety Excellence Award (CSEA), where they competed against other AGC members from around the country for the coveted safety awards. We have since been notified that Emerick Construction Co., Hamilton Construction Co., and New Tech Electric, Inc. have been selected as finalists and invited to present their programs at AGC of America's national convention in Palm Springs this month. This continues the Oregon-Columbia Chapter's highly successful representation at the national level with numerous finalists, some category winners, and even a grand award winner.

AGC offers congratulations to all our 2005 ROSE award winners for a job well done. The entire construction industry benefits from their commitment and pursuit of safety excellence.