



Construction company wins award for young and new worker mentoring program

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Ledcor Industries Inc. was honoured in October with the award for Best Training/Orientation Program for Young and New Workers. The new award, sponsored by the Workers' Compensation Board of BC, was presented at the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE) award banquet held on October 23, 2002.

Honourable mentions for the same award were presented to J.D. Little Forest Centre in Prince George and London Drugs Store #12 in Kelowna.

Entrants for the award were evaluated based how they identified the training needs of young and new employees and the process used to design and implement a training/orientation program that considered the best interests of the organization as well as employees. Companies had to demonstrate the process used to verify and evaluate the effectiveness of the training, and how the program's results were measured. As well, the company had to indicate what lessons had been learned during the development and implementation of their program that could be applied by other organizations.

WCB established this award to draw attention to the difficulties encountered by young and new workers. From 1992 to 1996, nearly half of the fatalities among young workers aged 15 to 19 were in the construction industry.

Ledcor has taken a proactive approach to young and new worker safety by introducing a mentoring program for workers under 25 years and/or on a job site less than three months at all their worksites throughout Canada and the U.S.

WCB honoured Ledcor's approach for its use of mentoring to address young worker safety. The Board recognizes that a new worker's first few weeks on the job are crucial to establishing good safety practices. Habits tend to deteriorate over time, so it is key that a mentor teaches good habits from the start.

Although all their new employees receive an initial safety orientation, Ledcor's mentoring program allows time to ensure that good safety practices are ingrained in new and young workers from their first day on the job. Superintendents at each site select seasoned workers who would make good role models to serve as mentors. These mentors team up with employees new to the construction industry, student workers, and first-year trade apprentices for their first month of employment.

During that month, mentors ensure their workers are following correct procedures, alert them to any on-site hazards, and encourage them to ask questions. New employees must work within the line of sight of their mentor at all times. That means if the mentor takes a break, the new worker must stop working and wait for the mentor to return.

The mentor and superintendent complete evaluations of the new worker at the halfway point and at the end of the one-month program. Together they decide whether the worker is ready to work on his own.

"Being mentored makes workers feel like they belong to a team, and it really boosts morale," says Jim Billey, Ledcor manager of health, safety, and environmental protection. "It makes them feel welcomed and a part of a good organization." Billey adds that being mentored also strengthens workers' loyalty to the company and motivates them to work more efficiently.

Ledcor's mentoring program is just part of the company's extensive health and safety program, which includes hazard assessments, project-specific safety programs, weekly safety meetings for subcontractors, regular site inspections, a joint health and safety committee, and a new orientation program.

For more information on preventing injuries in construction, visit our Construction Health and Safety Centre at <http://construction.healthandsafetycentre.org>.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS

I would like to include your ideas and questions in future columns. Send your ideas for future columns to me at dnelson@wcb.bc.ca or call me at (604) 231-8631 or toll free in B.C. at 1 888 621-7233.