

PROFILE

Aluminum Curtainwall System Inc.

Kamloops, BC

Building on experience

When Aluminum Curtainwall Systems Inc. (ACS) started up three years ago, they had a lot of safety experience available to draw upon. ACS is a spin-off from a company that had already been in the business for 30 years. The new operation provided an opportunity to build an excellent safety program into every aspect of the business.

ACS designs and manufactures custom curtainwall frames for office buildings. All aspects of production are done right in their own facility, including manufacturing the aluminum frames, assembling the frames and glazing them, and finishing them with sealant. Finally, exterior trims are applied, the panels are cured then crated and shipped to the construction site for installation.

An operation like this presents a wide range of workplace hazards. “We handle sharp metal and glass objects, and a lot of our work deals with chemicals and sealant,” notes Kamil Kropac, General Manager. There’s a lot of heavy lifting involved, and back injuries are a major hazard in this industry.”

With their many years of experience in the industry, the ACS team designed their new 45,000 square foot facility to minimize the risk of injuries. The plant has overhead cranes to eliminate a lot of lifting in both the fabrication and assembly areas. The workspace is well lit. Employees wear gloves, and use dispensers, spray bottles, and lint-free rags. They get training in WHMIS and material safety data sheets. When a new product is introduced, the supervisor goes over the related health and safety issues to make sure the proper precautions are taken.

With safety issues ranging from heavy lifting to sharp objects to toxic chemicals, the ACS team knew that a good training program would be critical in preventing workplace injuries. At their request, a local college developed and delivered a training program specifically designed for their company. Staff also receive an employee handbook detailing occupational health and safety procedures. “Once your employees have a good basic knowledge of safety, it’s much easier to prevent bad habits from developing, and the result is a safer facility,” says Kropac.

ACS employees actively participate in the safety program. They know that any issues that arise will be dealt with in a timely manner, according to Kropac. When something new comes up in fabrication or assembly, they work together to change their procedures so that safety can be maintained. “For example,” says Kropac, “when we do a custom frame that is an odd shape or size, we have to figure out how it can be put together safely. Will an employee have to stretch beyond a safe reach? How can we pick up that piece of glass and put it in the opening without someone getting hurt? How will we stabilize and support the frame?”



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Relying on experience was not just a start-up strategy for the ACS safety program — it continues in their every day operation. Experienced staff work with new employees to ensure that they are working safely, and to suggest better, easier ways of doing things.

Kropac believes their successful safety record is a result of the company's attention to detail and a positive attitude toward safety that starts from the top down. Although he acknowledges there are many hazards in their manufacturing processes, their employees have the necessary training to deal with the risks. Every detail makes a difference — attitudes, a well-lit working environment, proper equipment and procedures, and a tailor-made training program. ACS decided to get it all right from the beginning, and it's working.

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