



Safety in numbers

Every Monday morning at Boeing Ogden's Little Mountain Test Facility in northern Utah, workers meet to talk about the coming week. The agenda might include centrifuge testing of a 1,000-pound (450-kilogram) test article, stage separation testing of a rocket or electromagnetic effects testing using lightning strikes.

"We recognize the inherent safety risks of our business," said Russ Hohmann, manager of the facility's Shock and Vibration labs. "Equipment and tests involve hazards and we don't take them for granted. We have a policy that all employees have the authority to stop a test if there is a safety concern."

"I don't worry about getting injured because we follow well-established processes and procedures to keep us all safe," added test engineer Vernon Hardy. "We respect the potential dangers of the tests we perform and, consequently, we work in a very safe place."

'SAFETY FIRST' FOCUS

With risks that include ordnance, laser and radiation sources, forklift and crane activities, and high-voltage work, how did Ogden become a Boeing model for safety? Indeed, the site's 270 employees boast more than 4 million hours—or more than seven years—without a day lost due to a job-related lost-time injury or illness.

"The employees accomplished it," said Rick Schankel, Boeing Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) program director and Ogden site executive. "They were supported by a committed Environment, Health and Safety team and by management, but it was accomplished by each and every employee."

Boeing employees at and around Ogden perform sustaining engineering and a variety of upgrades for the ICBM program and

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engineering support for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) program. Located at multiple facilities in the area, employees for both programs also work in the field at various locations.

While many of the site's most hazardous operations take place at the Little Mountain Test Facility, employees throughout Boeing Ogden do their part to maintain a safe workplace. Technical publications editor Valerie Woodruff wields a pen instead of a laser, but she and her work group think "safety first" all the same.

"Working in an office environment we accomplish safety training and apply all learned ergonomic principles," she said. "We're also responsible for incorporating safety requirements into our documents to support workers in the field."

Vien Voraotsady, a test and evaluation lab technician for GMD, climbs into missile silos to upgrade launch support equipment as part of his job. "As long as you have the safety mindset, you will

PHOTO: In the lab environment at Ogden Little Mountain Test Facility in Utah, Bill Lang (from left), Terry Blackburn and Vernon Hardy perform test article setup for an electromagnetic compatibility test in an anechoic (echo-free) chamber. WILLIAM MILNER



Adding up the numbers

- 4.3 million work hours, 2,724 days or more than seven years without a lost-time injury or work-related illness
- 50 consecutive months on or ahead of plan on the Integrated Defense Systems Environment, Health and Safety performance scorecard
- 50-plus consecutive government agency and customer inspections without a violation
- 100 percent EHS training compliance (averaging nine classes per employee)
- 2008 Boeing Employee Survey: 96 percent of employees say, "I feel safe from accidents and health hazards in my work area," a 5 percent increase in four years



PHOTOS: (TOP) Dale Sterrett and Joe Oberuc provide environment, health and personnel safety guidance for operations. **(ABOVE)** Lab technicians Bill Lang and Randy Rose work on the Ogden, Utah, site's electromagnetic effects capacitor bank.

WILLIAM MILNER

incorporate safety into everything you do," he said. "Before I start a job, I think it through and make sure there is no safety hazard involved. If there is, I try to alert everyone and find a way to eliminate it."

CREATING A MINDSET

Site leadership believes that "flawless execution of the business means flawless execution of environment, health and safety practices," according to Schankel. To get there, he said, the site took several steps, including establishing full-time Ogden Environmental, Health and Safety staff: Joe Oberuc and Dale Sterrett. Among the team's responsibilities: Design facilities and processes, develop programs, and conduct operations to protect the environment, employee health and safety—and ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, company requirements and contractual requirements. Ogden also ramped up its employee safety training and established an executive council that meets monthly to oversee safety at the site and review performance measurements.

Also, about three years ago, the Engineering organization at Ogden established an early program involvement procedure that designs EHS practices into new programs. "Planning safety into a program is much more effective than trying to incorporate it later on," said Kelly Johnson, Ogden's Ground and Systems program manager. "Through this process, EHS personnel, management, customers and suppliers become involved early in the proposal phase, developing plans that ensure the protection of personnel, compliance to regulatory requirements and fostering of good environment, health and safety behavior with Boeing internal and external partners."

While acknowledging Ogden's current safety record may someday end, Oberuc said, "We know the accomplishments can never be taken away. It is the sum of our environment, health and safety performance measures that are most important. With the safety steps Ogden has taken we are keeping Boeing employees safe one day at a time, and supporting a healthy business."

– Vicki Hogue