

Safety 24/7

A new global health and safety system is helping Boeing sites further enhance workplace safety

By Patrick Summers

Boeing Salt Lake City faced an unusual challenge: how to continually improve workplace safety when the site's overall performance was already showing good progress. The site's 520 employees had two injuries that caused lost days from work in 2010.

"We had a low injury rate to begin with, but even one injury is one too many," said Todd Silva, manager of Environment, Health and Safety, at the Salt Lake City facility, which is part of Boeing Commercial Airplanes' Fabrication business unit.

In mid-2010, the site became the first Boeing manufacturing facility in the United States to embrace a new health and safety management system. The Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series (OHSAS) 18001 is a globally recognized standard that uses common processes and tools to reduce the risk of workplace injury and illness, focus on continual safety and health improvement, and emphasize shared responsibility for workplace safety.

Todd Nelson, a machinist in Salt Lake City, leads a Safety Now employee involvement team and notes the site's already low rate of workplace injuries. "We want to keep heading in the right direction," he said, "and OHSAS 18001 will help us do that."

As part of Boeing's Safety Now effort to reduce workplace injuries, all major manufacturing sites will conform to the new safety management system by the end of 2011.

For Salt Lake City and other sites that have already adopted the new system, the

focus on continual improvement is helping to elevate safety practices to a new level of accomplishment.

"It makes you go through every aspect of your operations and identify and rank risks in a disciplined way," Silva explained. "When you take a step back and have an objective look, you can identify things that may not be causing problems today but will cause problems tomorrow."

Establishing a process for identifying and prioritizing safety risks is a major benefit of OHSAS 18001, according to Bryan Bauer, the senior Environment, Health and Safety specialist who is leading the system's deployment across the Boeing enterprise. "Boeing is very good at identifying and mitigating hazards," he said. "But OHSAS 18001—which adds a formal requirement and system to evaluate and rank the risk of a hazard occurring—helps us get to the next level. It helps an organization target its resources at reducing safety risks."

BDS Puget Sound became the first Boeing Defense, Space & Security site to achieve conformance with the new safety management system earlier this year. Operations Director Angela Hall said it is a valuable resource in the site's safety management.

"Our sites have had a robust safety system in place for a number of years and we're proud of our progress in improving workplace safety," she said. "OHSAS 18001 brings an emphasis on personal commitment and accountability for the system's success. Every employee is responsible and accountable for a safe

workplace. For me that's a very powerful message."

Rick Edwards, occupational health and safety specialist for BDS Puget Sound, agrees. "OHSAS 18001 essentially says safety is not a specialty niche concern; it needs to be an integral part of the organization," he said.

Hall credits the site's long-standing commitment to safety and the new system's tools for helping BDS Puget Sound reduce its lost workday case rate by more than 25 percent since the beginning of the year. The lost workday case rate measures workplace injuries that cause at least a day away from work.

Jennifer Rezmer, Environment, Health and Safety manager for BDS Puget Sound, appreciates the way the system emphasizes communications to help create a safer workplace. "It is helping us create a culture of openness where employees feel comfortable in bringing safety issues and questions forward." ■

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PHOTOS: (Left) Mill operator Todd Nelson, Fabrication, uses a lift-assist device. **BLAIR KUNZ & ASSOCIATES PHOTOGRAPHY LC (Inset)** 777 tool designer Patrick Franzen, kneeling, and team review ideas for safer tooling. **GAIL HANUSA/BOEING**