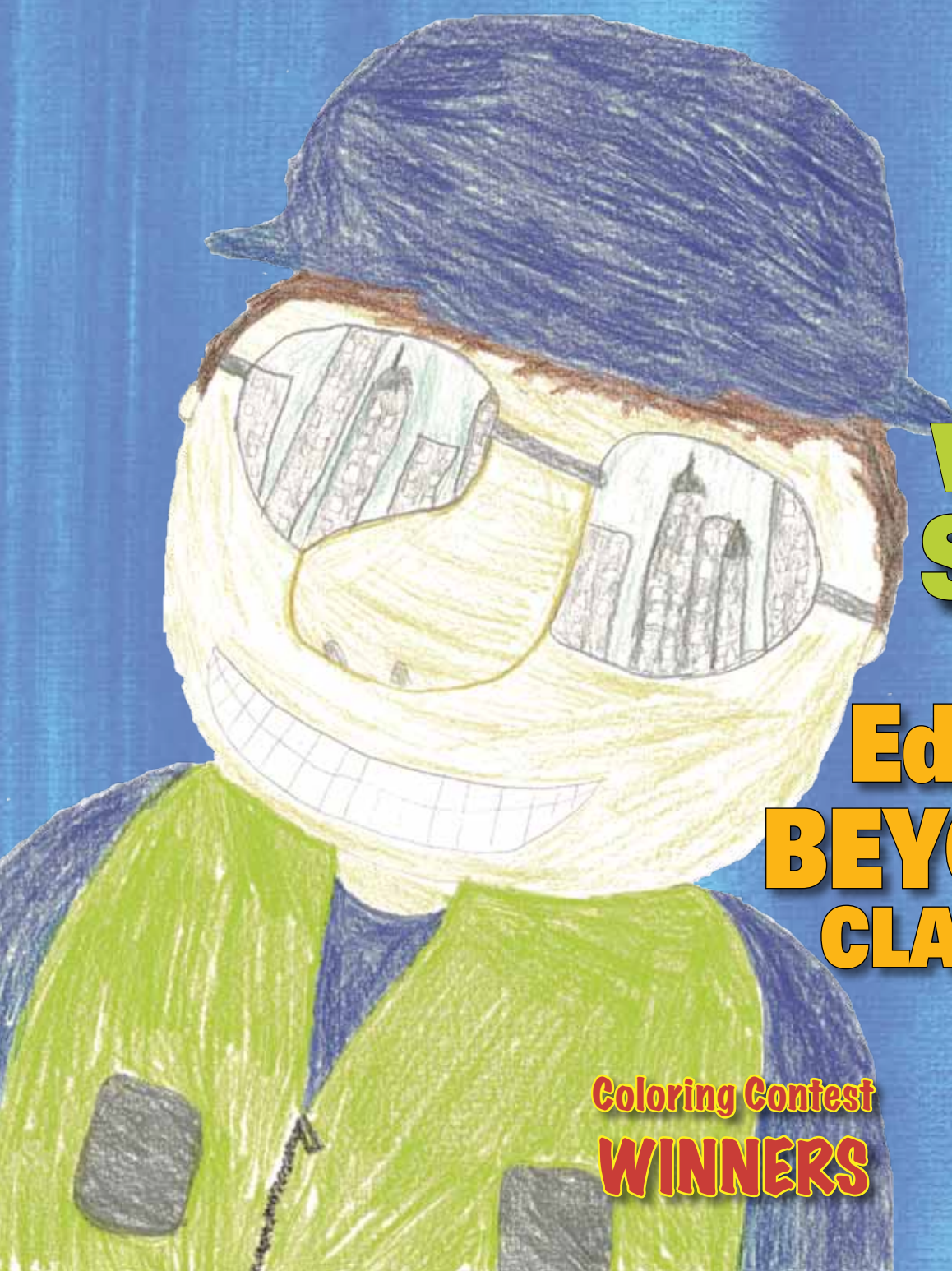


# Construction Magazine

## NEWS UPDATE

SUMMER 2011

Associated General Contractors  
Oregon-Columbia Chapter



The  
**VALUE** of  
**SAFETY**

Education  
**BEYOND** the  
**CLASSROOM**

Coloring Contest  
**WINNERS**

**AGC** Oregon  
Columbia  
Chapter  
ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS

# The VALUE of Safety

By John Rumler



## The Top 10 Most Frequently Cited OSHA

1. Scaffolding
2. Fall protection
3. Hazard communication
4. Ladders
5. Respiratory protection
6. Lockout/tagout
7. Electrical (wiring methods, components, equipment)
8. Powered industrial trucks
9. Electrical systems design
10. Machine guarding



Photo by Liz Wade

The common denominator for successful safety programs is that they are viewed as an investment that pays long-term dividends, they start with a commitment from a company's top executives, and they reach out to everyone.

In decades past, some construction companies paid lip service to safety but inwardly assumed that injuries and even fatalities were part and parcel of working in a dangerous industry.

As the industry continues evolving, becoming more technical, more competitive, and more sophisticated, those attitudes are falling by the wayside.

More companies such as Slayden Construction Group are striving to integrate safety consciousness into their company's culture. Slayden, which has not had a lost-time injury in the past five years, recently won the Construction Safety Excellence Award (CSEA) from AGC of America for its commitment to safety training and education and its overall safety performance in 2010.

"As a result of our safety record, our workers' compensation modifier is much lower than the industry average, and the savings are shared with our employees through a safety incentive program," says Vice President Jeremy Lawson. SCG has been a CSEA finalist two years in a row and is also an OR-OSHA SHARP employer, an Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration designation that recognizes their exemplary safety and health management system.

The factors driving today's greater focus on safety are driven as much by economics as altruism. While it's only natural that good companies want their employees to return home safe at the end of the day, benevolence aside, an effective safety program helps a company's bottom line while giving them a competitive edge, especially when it comes to bidding.

The benefits of a good safety record include less time-off for injured workers leading to better morale, higher productivity, reduced workers' compensation and insurance premiums, and the ability to be highly competitive in requests for proposals and bids where safety is a scoring factor in reducing costs associated with accidents and injuries.

Slayden Construction Group's excellent safety program is recognized both locally and nationally; they recently received the Construction Safety Excellence Award from AGC of America. Leading the team, which has not had a lost-time injury in the past five years, is Vice President Jeremy Lawson, and Tom McCullen and Bruce Lawson, SCG safety managers.



Photo by Dan Carter

Mark Hopkins, corporate safety manager for EC Company.

"Although the up-front costs are significant, the long-term gains are overwhelmingly worthwhile,"

says Mark Hopkins, corporate safety manager for EC Company, which has an enviable safety record. With a fully integrated Injury Free Environment culture that's achieved exceptional results, the safety program is held accountable through company vice president Joel Scroggy and the project managers.

Four years ago, EC's progress with its safety efforts hit a plateau, Hopkins says. "We made a companywide commitment and got a total buy-in from everyone, from the president down. We put accountability tools in place and changed our belief system to where we now think every accident is preventable."

EC holds monthly and weekly safety meetings as well as daily toolbox meetings, and begins each workday with a 10 to 15 minute "stretch and flex" session, involving everyone from the office staff to the crews in the field. As a result, the company has reduced injuries from sprains and strains by 50 percent.

Few companies have a stronger commitment to safety than Emerick Construction, a five-year SHARP recipient which has held PRIDE status for several years and is in the process of completing re-certification now. Jim McKune, chief operations officer, says about 10 years ago the company wanted to upgrade its safety programs, so it partnered with OSHA and AGC to become the first contractor in Oregon to be an AGC Safety PRIDE recipient.

AGC Safety PRIDE (Program Recognition Indicating Dedication and Excellence) is a statewide voluntary safety management program that was

implemented in 2006, is provided at no cost to contractor members, and is recognized by Oregon OSHA.

Emerick also earned the AGC's ROSE Award (Recognition of Safety Excellence) in eight out of the last nine years, and was also the third general contractor in Oregon to earn SHARP status from OSHA.

"We learned a lot from our involvement in the safety programs," McKune says. "You undergo a heavy, in-depth analysis from the office, to the jobsite, to your training programs. It's expensive and it isn't easy, but it is totally worthwhile in the long run."

McKune says the biggest change he's seen regarding safety is that smaller companies and subcontractors are growing more and more safety conscious. "It isn't just the big guys who have good safety programs. Safety is becoming a part of the equation for almost everyone now."



Photo by Liz Wade

Emerick Construction was the first contractor in Oregon to become an AGC Safety PRIDE recipient, a statewide voluntary safety management program recognized by Oregon OSHA. Jim McKune, Emerick's chief operating officer, has long realized that successful safety programs, while not easy, are worthwhile in the long run.

## The Seven Steps to Building Company Safety

1. Management commitment
2. Accountability
3. Employee involvement
4. Hazard identification/control
5. Accident and incident investigation
6. Training and evaluation
7. Get outside help: OSHA, AGC, insurance carrier, etc.

Provided by Dave Parsons, safety director, Fred Shearer & Sons

Likewise, Orenco Systems is three years SHARP and also was just approved for "government" contract spending. Following safety regulations was one criterion they had to meet to pursue government contracts as well as meeting affirmative action and other federal regulations, says Pete Kimbrel, chair of the safety committee at Orenco and previously at Bayliner. Since starting the SHARP certification process in May of 2007, Kimbrel says the company has focused on safety even more, and as a result it has seen a 50 percent reduction in the total number of injury claims and time-loss workdays.

"There's nothing that special about what we do safety-wise," says Kimbrel. "If you pay attention to the rules and regulations, and truly care about your employees, you are just as eligible for the SHARP program as we are."

With 33 years as a construction safety specialist, Dave Parsons has seen the attitude and approach to safety change to an overwhelmingly proactive and positive one.

"Our industry is only as hazardous as you make it," he says. "The mindset is now that every accident is preventable."

When Parsons was a youngster visiting his grandparents' prune farm, he paid special attention to some workers who were setting ladders up incorrectly and working on them in a dangerous fashion. He also noticed people hitching rides on the tractors by sitting on the fenders. "I brought

## WHAT IS AN EMR?

Once a company has an injury or loss, it takes at least three years for it not to affect their experience modification rate (EMR), similar to receiving a moving violation while driving your vehicle, which takes three years to be removed from your driving record. With a clean safety record, the EMR drops and gives a company a competitive edge.

An EMR of 1.0 is considered average, anything above that is worse than average, and anything below is better. A good EMR decreases insurance premiums and goes hand in hand with bidding jobs. General contractors, government agencies, and private owners often will not hire companies with questionable safety records.

Photo by Liz Wade



Emerick's safety team has received the SHARP status for many years. SHARP recognizes small employers who operate an exemplary safety and health management system, and singles you out among your business peers as a model for worksite safety and health.

this to my grandfather's attention. At first he resisted, but then after a couple of people got injured, I said, "See what happens!" Spurred on by his grandmother who supported him, Parsons kept his safety mind-set and usually reviewed the sequence of events that led up to an injury.

As a safety consultant, Parsons helped companies reduce injuries/losses by creating a safety culture, managing risks, and controlling losses not just related to safety, but to general liability, property liability, and product and fleet liability.

The current director of the safety program at Fred Shearer and Sons, Parsons says increased safety consciousness isn't limited to construction, but is growing in all industries. "It used to be just the large companies focusing on safety; more and more mid-sized and smaller companies are getting on board than ever before."

John Park started in the construction industry by pushing a broom, completed a carpenter's apprenticeship in 1988, and worked his way up to VP of operations at Fred Shearer and Sons. He spent a dozen years working in construction safety and describes immense changes on a global scale.

The common denominator for successful safety programs, he says, is



Photo provided by Orenco Systems, Inc.

Pete Kimbrel, safety manager for Orenco Systems, Inc., is congratulated by Mary Heilner, human resources manager, and Jeff Ball, vice president of operations, after Orenco achieved a second year of SHARP certification. Orenco has since completed its third year of the SHARP program successfully.

that they are viewed as an investment that pays long-term dividends, and they must start with a commitment from a company's top executives and reach out to everyone, including and especially the most newly-hired apprentices. "The challenge can be getting everyone on board."

So just how hard is it for a company to implement new safety habits and practices?

"It isn't that difficult if you have 100 percent ownership support and a company safety culture that is understood by all employees," says Lawson. **AGC**