

# SafetySource<sup>TM</sup> Bulletin

**EDITOR: DILYS ROBERTSON**

**October 3, 2007 – Issue # 0025**

## Articles

- [Safety Best Practice at NB Power](#)

## Corporate Corner

- [Can Safety Managers be Liable for Employers' OHS Duties?](#)

## OHS Legislative Developments

- [BC Guidelines for Young/New Worker Training](#)
- [Ontario WSIB Reviewing Early Return to Work Policy](#)

## OHS News and Practical Resources

- [Nanotechnology and OHS – A Case-Study based Webinar](#)
- [Asthma Risks for Cleaners and Housekeepers](#)
- [Ontario Electrical Worker Fined](#)

## **Articles**

### **Safety Best Practice at NB Power**

New Brunswick Power has achieved a safety record to be proud of. In the 1990s, the company was experiencing between 110 -120 lost time accidents every year and its workers' compensation assessment was \$1. Now the lost time accidents are down to single digits and its assessment rate down to \$0.54. As a multi-location (Provincial) organization that generates, transmits and distributes electricity, including nuclear generation, safety at work is something to be taken very seriously. But achieving excellence in workplace health and safety is not an easy task and demands innovative approaches and best practices that will work in the organization. We interviewed Duff Boyd, Director of Health, Safety and Security at NB Power, to find out about best OHS practices that have put the organization well on the road to excellence.

**About NB Power.** NB Power employs some 2500 employees, 85% of whom are represented by Local 37 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). It is organized as a holding company – NB Power Holding- and five subsidiaries. There are eleven local JHS Committees and a central joint committee. This central committee represents senior NB Power management and Senior IBEW representatives. All committees meet once a month. Initially the central joint committee spent much of its time dealing with issues raised by local joint committees. Now, as Boyd points out, local joint committees are so good at resolving issues raised locally by themselves, that there are few such issues being brought to the central committee.

**It's All about Safety Culture.** As many modern approaches to OHS management today emphasize, the nature of the safety culture that is fostered in any organization plays a central role in the effectiveness of the OHS Program. So it is no surprise to learn that the safety culture, that has been carefully fostered at NB, forms the background to their safety success. The guiding vision that unifies the strategy is "People at their Best".

The bones of this safety culture started in the mid 1990's when NB Power realized that they had to integrate eight areas that were all seen as being closely inter-related. These were:

## Partnership with Labour

Team-based resourcing (basically, addressing employment requirements by looking at Team needs instead of only individual skills)

## Employee well-being

Dual-track compensation (this is a program designed to allow for extra compensation for employees who are good at what they do and don't wish to move into a supervisory or management stream solely for an increase in pay)

## Diversity

## Leadership

## Relationship Management (as opposed to Performance Management)

## Workplace Health and Safety

These functions were integrated under the general banner of Human Resources. As Boyd explained, all these functions must work together for any one to be effective. For example, if labour-management relations are poor, there will likely be difficulties in getting prevention strategies accepted and working effectively. And this is well demonstrated at NB Power where Boyd and union representatives often travel together for meetings, training sessions and so on.

And the President's message – "if it's not safe, we don't do it" - is very clear to all employees.

There is a unique safety focus at NB Power that forms the backbone of the safety culture. Essentially this focus regards safety as something other than what people *think is safe*. It is seen as more than simply the absence of incidents. In fact, NB Power believes many traditional approaches have a tendency to lead to "the normalization of safety deviations". Instead, all employees are encouraged to think *safety standards* and focus on those. 'Safety standards include all the various kinds of standards – applicable standards from standard-setting bodies such as CSA, OHS legislation and all company OHS policies, procedures and documented rules, safe working practices etc. In fact the theme for NB Power's biannual one-day safety meeting this year was: "How Safe are Your Standards"? This theme is the second progression of what Boyd describes as a 4 step process in elevating employees to be in the right frame of mind at all times.

**Biannual Safety Meetings that Engage People.** Called 'Safety Meets', these safety meetings started in 2001 for all employees of the transmission and distribution groups. It was a one day safety conference, with speakers but was a very traditionally based approach, with fairly conventional safety topics. By 2005, it was based more on topics specific to NB Power's own safety culture. For example, there were sessions on Leadership and Safety and Labour Relations. A safety facilitator was brought in to aid discussions and conclusions.

A big change in these safety meets took place this year. For a start, all employees were invited to attend – and of the 2,500 employees, about 2,300 were able to attend. Attendance by the company's vice-presidents was also the mandate for the sessions. To accommodate so many employees, the Safety Meet was held in six locations in thirteen sessions. As well, NB Power's contractors were invited, as well as employees from other local organizations such as Fire-Fighters from the City of Moncton, and representatives of the WHSCC.

As mentioned above, the theme for the 2007 Safety Meet was "How Safe are Your Standards?". The next change was using unique ways to engage everyone at these sessions. As one NB Power Safety Manager put it: "When you engage your audience they are much more likely to retain the message, and humour is one of the best ways to do that." During the morning session, a 'talk-show skit' was conducted by a local personality "Dr Phillie Mae". She interviewed all NB Power's Vice Presidents, the business manager of the IBEW and other employees. While this was fun, the safety messages were serious and safety-related questions were prepared in advance. At the same time, by putting VPs and the Union business manager 'on-the-spot', employees were able to see them in a very different and more revealing light. Another fun

session consisted of a 2 hour monologue by well-known comic Marshall Button, in his familiar role as “Lucien” – the New Brunswick Blue Colour Philosopher. For NB Power’s safety meet, however, his performance as ‘Lucien’ was tailored to safety. During his skit, he starts as a maintenance worker with terrible safety habits and by the end is transformed into a health and safety champion. Despite these two sessions being perceived as great fun, underlying safety messages were serious. Boyd himself presented a serious presentation on safety standards using NASA as an example of an organization in which deviation from standards resulted in the Columbia and Challenger disasters. (See Bulletin # 7 – a US Chemical Safety Board Investigation that used the same methodology as that used for investigating the NASA disasters).

**Measures of Success?** Hundreds of comments were received from employees following the Safety Meet and 95% of these were positive. One employee (a supervisor) had this to say: “I am not sure who created and produced Safety Meet 2007, though I would like to nominate them for an award. We’ve been talking for a few days now about the session and the effective manner in which it was presented.” It seems as though NB Power will not need many more similar Safety Meets before it hits its target of zero accidents! As NB WHSCC said: “The WHSCC commends NB Power on their commitment and innovative approach to safety education, and we invite other employers to heed their example and seek creative methods of their own to promote health and safety.”

