

Safety Is a Bright Spot at Sawmill Too

This article by John Crane, Bright New Zealand sawmill manager, is reprinted from that site's newsletter

In what was otherwise a dismal year by nearly every measurement standard, 2008 saw Bright Wood New Zealand achieve a terrific safety record. The numbers looked like this, where LTA is Lost Time Accident and TCIR is Total Case Incident Rate – a calculated number that indicates the frequency of accidents where associates sought professional medical attention, adjusted to total payroll hours worked.

Year	TCIR	LTA
2008	7	4
2007	23	7
2006	29	13
2005	37	14
2004	43	22

BWNZ cut back to one shift in April of 2007, so the LTA numbers from 2007 and earlier are not exactly “apples-to-apples” with 2008. However, the TCIR rate adjusts to payroll hours, making it a more reliable comparison tool, regardless of total hours worked.

This steady march toward improved safety achievement has been no accident – pardon the pun. The vast improvement in our safety record is the direct result of a changing culture in our workplace – away from the “...she’ll be all right, mate” attitude to an attitude where our associates are aware of their surroundings, are aware of the various workplace hazards we can’t isolate them from, and take the time necessary to do a job correctly and safely.

To be sure, a certain percentage of



Photo courtesy of John Crane, BWNZ

Bright Wood New Zealand's Health and Safety Committee gets a pat on the back for their role in bringing about a change in the sawmill's culture and ultimately the site's safety record. Team members include [back row, left to right] **Willie Gibson, Bronson Reece, Alan Baker, Adam Chapman**, [front row] **Vicky McWilliam** and **Debbie Brown**. See page 8 to read an interview with Debbie Brown by Safeguard Magazine. The NZ publication asked the lumber grader to describe the challenges and rewards of being a safety representative.

our associates have always made safety awareness and safe working practices a high priority. What *has* changed, therefore, is both the number and the percentage of our associates who treat safety as a top priority.

Much of the thanks for this culture shift must be directed to the company's Health and Safety Committee. Five years ago, the monthly H&S Committee meetings were largely an exercise in tedium; one of going through the motions of meeting and keeping minutes so we could comply with the law – but accomplishing little. In those days, management had to urge and cajole associates into putting their names up for election, simply so we could fill enough seats on the committee to have a meeting.

But slowly, over the course of the past two or three years, our H&S Committee members have come to realize they are making a difference. Phil Cordes, then our Health and Safety manager, took it upon himself

to train our H&S reps in STOP techniques, and encouraged each of them to utilize this tool to increase our overall safety awareness – and it's worked! Gradually, our work force has come to understand that STOP observations are not punitive but are provided to both acknowledge the positive aspects of their work routine and to suggest ways in which they might improve their workplace safety habits. And, we've all come to realize that STOP observations are particularly effective when coming from fellow workmates rather than from managers and superiors.

The company offers a special thanks to each of its Health and Safety Representatives: Debbie Brown, Bronson Reece, Willie Gibson, Alan Baker, Vicky McWilliam, and Adam Chapman. Your collective efforts have helped bring about a *real* change in our workplace safety culture – and our statistics show just how much progress has been made. Well done, people! Very well done!