

KAL TIRE

Vernon, BC
www.kaltire.ca

Kal Tire well on the road to a safer, healthier workplace

Workers and management at Kal Tire say that when it comes to health and safety, seeing is believing.

“You can always find a reason or excuse not to wear safety equipment like eye or hearing protection,” said Archie Stroh, Senior Vice President at Kal Tire. That changes when you see the effects of workplace accidents.”

Though Kal Tire has always had a concern for the health and safety of its employees, staff has made a renewed commitment. When Kal Tire began to participate in the Workers’ Compensation Board’s Focus Firm Strategy in 1997 it was decided that employees needed to be shown health and safety, instead of just hearing about it. Bruce Walkden, Kal Tire’s Health and Safety Coordinator and Phil Carroll, a WCB Occupational Safety Officer helped introduce the Focus Firm Strategy and along with the members of the joint health and safety committee have found creative ways to accomplish this goal.



For example, Kal Tire regularly brings in Mel Camilli to speak to its workers about the effects to his family, friends and employer of the accident where he lost both his legs. And, Kal Tire also publishes a safety bulletin that identifies hazards, and describes injuries that have occurred within the company.

“All of a sudden,” said Stroh, “it’s a little more real to our guys, and they work to maintain healthier and safer standards.”

But the transition didn’t come overnight.

When Phil Carroll was assigned to Kal Tire, attitudes towards occupational health and safety were much different. But workers at Kal Tire soon took to Carroll’s hands-on approach.

“It was nice to have someone to talk to,” said Walkden. “Every time a problem came up, we could talk about it [with Carroll], and find solutions with someone who actually understood the nature of our business.”

“There’s been a real attitude change at Kal Tire,” explained Carroll. “Where before stores didn’t like it when WCB officers showed up, they now ask for inspections. The store managers now maintain a real sense of accountability, and that goes right down to the workers on the shop floor.”

Both Carroll and Walkden say the success of the program also has impacted Kal Tire’s profit sharing program.

Besides the saving in personal suffering, employee’s are learning that effective health and safety saves money for the company and themselves through their 50/50 profit share plan,” said Walkden.

The numbers show that Kal Tire’s renewed safety commitment has been paying off. In 1997, Kal Tire had \$1.3 million in claims costs. In 2000, that number was basically half, sitting at \$673,000.

In 2000, 74 lost-time claims were filed. But this year so far (as of July 2001), there have only been 31. With only four months to go in 2001, it looks as though Kal tire will have a significantly improved record for lost time. And the length of time the injured workers are taking off is going down too. Kal tire is currently just below the industry average, whereas they used to be far above it.

“When those numbers are flashed in front of the employees,” said Brent Przybille, WCB Regional Manager for the Central Interior, “they should be proud. They’ve achieved a lot in a short period of time.”

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