

The Renaissance Vancouver Hotel Harbourside Vancouver, BC

Hotel fairs well with low injury rate

The hotel industry is typically plagued with lots of musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) and cuts, slips and falls. Because the Renaissance Vancouver Hotel Harbourside's injury record was higher than the industry average, it was looking for ways to reduce accidents and injuries among its 320 employees. Coming into the WCB Focus Firm Strategy seemed a natural partnership.

"We worked with them the year before they became a focus firm," says Alanna Nadeau, WCB occupational hygiene officer in Vancouver Centre/North region. "When the hotel became a focus firm we formalized what had already been started."

Peter Enders, Director of Loss Prevention, at the Renaissance says the hotel began by revamping their safety committee and revisiting their entire safety inspection format. "That seemed to make a difference - accidents reduced almost immediately," says Enders. "We looked at prevention, did an ergonomic risk assessment, rated all the job positions at the hotel and trained our staff on lifting and slips and falls."

Enders says these efforts have paid off. In 1998, the Hotel lost 405 days to accident claims, but for the first five months of 2001, only 23 days.

Nadeau also helped the hotel put together an effective return-to-work program. "The WCB worked with us to strengthen our return-to-work program, which helped to substantially reduce time-loss claims," praises Enders.

Hotel workers praise management's approach to educating employees. "They've been adamant about getting safety information to everybody here," says Paul McLaughlin who works in purchasing and receiving and is co-chair of the hotel's joint committee. "Their doors are always open if anyone has a concern. We have a bulletin board to communicate to staff every day, and we have a daily newsletter for all the staff that always has tips about safety."

One of the showpieces in the Renaissance's safety program is the annual health and safety fair for employees. Staff from other Vancouver hotels is invited to the half-day fair.

"We bring in a variety of vendors in the areas of health, safety and security," describes Enders. "We give our staff a free lunch and an opportunity to ask questions and pick up information."

Renaissance employees now share management's focus on safety, says McLaughlin. "The philosophy stems right down from our owners, the feeling that when you come to work you want to be safe and you want to have a clean, safe work environment," he says.

And that attitude will pay off. "A hotel like this has quite a large staff," says Nadeau. "It takes a few years to get it all in place, but when you keep at it the way the Renaissance has, the assessments go down year after year and the cost-savings start to show up."

Enders says that partnerships with employees, employers and the WCB have made the difference in their success as a focus firm. "That's the real key," he adds. "We all need to work together."

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