



## ***No detours from good health and safety practices***

With about 130 workers from five hiring halls, Imperial Paving Ltd. makes safety the prime tool of every trade — for cement masons, electricians, labourers, operating engineers and teamsters.

That's especially true for the 30 or so workers who are younger than 24 years, according to Safety Officer Bill Denault.

“Some of them want to impress their new bosses, and take short cuts that can put them and possibly other workers at risk,” he says. “We spend a lot of time on that, ingraining in them that the work must be done our way, the safe way.”

“Imperial Paving focuses on safety right from the get-go,” he says, pointing out that all of its front-line jobs start with two orientations. One covers company safety policies which the new employee signs off having read and received. Another deals with the initial job site, identifying its hazards as well as corresponding company controls put in place to minimize risks.

What follows then is a skills evaluation by the immediate supervisor and being paired with a mentor, a more senior, experienced employee trained by Imperial Paving to break in new workers. The goals, says Denault, are “safety and productivity, in that order.”

Tactics used by the mentors include:

- ▶ Having young workers repeat instructions, and keeping them from starting a task if what they say isn't satisfactory.

- ▶ Demonstrating each major task, in addition to describing it — showing how to rake asphalt, for instance, so the rake handle doesn't extend into passing traffic and get caught by a moving vehicle.

Ultimately, the most critical issue is the new employee's questions, according to Denault, "particularly when someone's afraid to ask. But our mentors always invite questions."

The mentoring process generally lasts about a month, and some workers are happily mentored more than once — if they change company divisions, moving from the pipe crew to paving, for example.

No matter what the circumstances, Imperial Paving doesn't detour from good workplace health and safety practices. Beyond orienting and mentoring new workers, this extends to regular tailgate meetings, weekly job sites inspection by Denault, and annual safety meetings for all of the company's employees.

On the Imperial highway, everyone knows that safety drives productivity.