



NAOSH members pose with the Sunshine Coast Regional District and their gnome for the Most Innovative award.

Ready, set, gnome? Creativity flourishes at NAOSH Week

By Gord Woodward

They had an Amazing Safety Race modelled after the renowned TV show — right down to a gnome mascot; a personal protective equipment (PPE) fashion show on a catwalk; and even a safety song written and performed by employees.

Those were just some of the activities the Sunshine Coast Regional District used to mark the 2017 North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week. Their creativity helped the message about workplace safety sink in — and earned the district recognition for Most Innovative campaign at the 20th annual B.C. NAOSH Week Awards last November.

“If you can have a bit of fun or ‘gamify’ the process, people learn in a different way and it sticks,” says Gerry Parker, the Regional District’s senior manager for Human Resources. “The feedback was that people had fun and learned a lot.”

From PPE presentations to a gnome on the run

The Sunshine Coast NAOSH Week planning team focused their campaign on PPE and critical thinking. For PPE, chief administrative officer Janette Loveys donned “more than ample” PPE to protect herself from cuts and eye injury while cutting the ribbon to launch the week’s activities. Later, staff paraded PPE in a fashion show “to showcase all the various positions that exist, and the types of equipment that need to be worn in our small but diverse organization,” Parker says.

Another goal of the team’s events: making critical thinking a habit whether at work or at home. “We wanted to make sure that we were making a difference both at work and in the community where we live,” says Parker.

That’s where the “Amazing Safety Race” came in.

Emulating the TV reality show format, the race included pit stops that challenged employees to make workplace safety decisions. It also featured an imitation of the garden gnome used on “The Amazing Race.” “The NAOSH Gnome faced many safety-sensitive situations and staff had to help answer how he should deal with the various hazards,” explains Parker.

And then there was the video. Using the tune of the 1982 song “Safety Dance” by Men Without Hats, regional district staff wrote and sang lyrics about their week’s activities.

Award judges were impressed with their campaign, and also awarded the regional district with an Overall Honourable Mention for the third straight year.

Many stepped up

But the district wasn’t alone in stepping up to the plate in 2017. Three other employers also took home multiple awards for their participation in NAOSH Week:

- EV Logistics, who tied for the Best Overall entry with Metro Vancouver Regional District, also topped the Transportation of Goods category;
- Squamish Nation (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) was honoured for Best Presentation of the Make Safety a Habit theme, and they also led the Regional Government/Regional Districts/Nations category;
- And Surewerx, a Coquitlam-based supplier of tools, equipment, and safety gear, was honoured with Best New Entry, and was the winner in the General Industry category.

When all was said and done, the B.C. NAOSH Week steering committee awarded 28 employers with an award or honourable mention.

What’s wrong with this scene?

Creative minds were also behind the two health and safety campaigns that tied for Best Overall.

At EV Logistics, daily events ranged from a material-handling equipment rodeo, to “What’s Wrong with this Scene?” contests, to an obstacle course. Employees were filmed talking about why and how they make safety a habit, and the video was then shown all week at the firm’s two grocery distribution centres and posted on YouTube.

At Metro Vancouver Regional District, the Joint Health and Safety Committee spent months planning a

calendar of daily activities at many of the region’s facilities. A safety fair, hands-on safety demonstrations, emergency drill, and audiometric testing were just some of the events.

Winning the award was “a wonderful way to encourage those who are committed to safety and actively making changes to get some recognition,” says Heather Tomsic, training and communications coordinator for Metro Vancouver. “It’s invaluable.”

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—Gerry Parker, senior manager, Sunshine Coast Regional District



CWH Design Build GP’s mascot at the 2017 NAOSH Awards Luncheon. The firm won in the Construction category.

Safety Champions lead by example

The awards were handed out at a luncheon in Surrey that gathered employers from around B.C. for the annual Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE) and NAOSH Week Awards.

Among the employers honoured, there were also 35 individual Safety Champions recognized at the luncheon.

“Workplace Safety Champions are the beating heart of a strong health and safety culture,” says Bob Neilson, vice-president of the B.C. NAOSH Week steering committee. “They are people who are

passionate about safety, take an active role on safety committees, or lead by example among their peers.”

You can see the full list of NAOSH Week winners by searching for “NAOSH” at worksafebc.com.

NAOSH 2018: ‘Just get involved’

With the awards now handed out, attention turns to NAOSH Week 2018. It runs May 6 to 12 and will be launched nationally in B.C.

“It’s important for organizations to understand that being involved in activities like NAOSH Week is not only important to their employees, but it’s important to industry,” says Richard Dulong, president of the NAOSH steering committee.

Employers and workers can easily participate without having a big budget, he says. “You just need to get involved. Have a little bit of fun, be creative, and try to find a new way to share an old, important message of making safety a habit.”

The rewards include possible awards but something even more important, says Chantell Olivier, marketing manager at Surewerx. “I found that because we engaged our staff in that week, people are now more aware of what’s around them and how to be more safe on a day-to-day basis.”



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