

“THE WORTHY GOAL WE ARE ALL CHASING”

Meet Canada’s 2016 electrical safety champions / **ANTHONY CAPKUN**

“A workplace free from electrical hazards is the worthy goal we are all chasing,” says Andrew Cochran, president of I-Gard, and we couldn’t agree more with our sponsor of the 2016 edition of the Electrical Safety Champion Awards program. “I-Gard would like to acknowledge the contribution and dedication to this goal of the award winners and all of the participants.”

Just as in our inaugural year (2015), we received some excellent nominations from across the country, making the final selection difficult indeed. I applaud everyone who took the time to submit their safety stories, and I’m only sorry we cannot recognize each and every one of you.

That said, kudos to our 2016 champions: Jason Loney of Grand West Electric Ltd., Nixon Electrical Services Ltd. and Horizon Utilities Corp.

As you read the vignettes that follow, you’ll notice a few things our winners share in common—not just with each other, but with our 2015 champs, too. They are all driven by a passion for safety; they see safety as, not just a moral obligation, but good business, too; they encourage near miss reporting; and they push continuous training and education, knowing the safety journey really has no end.

Maybe you’re just getting started on your own safety journey, or maybe you’re looking for new ways to take your existing program further; whatever the case, after reading these interviews with our champs, our hope is you will find something in their best practices to take back to your own organization.

NOMINATIONS FOR 2017
We’re expanding our national awards program to greater levels next year. Stay tuned for details in 2017!

INDIVIDUAL CHAMPION WINNER: Jason Loney, Grand West Electric Ltd. (Calgary, Alta.)

“Our safety culture has really changed since Jason took control of it; he created systems and processes that were simple to follow, and basically everyone in the company has bought into it. Without his drive and passion for safety, it would not be the culture it is today. He’s really the driving force behind it,” says GWE co-founder Anthony Dallazanna.

Jason Loney’s approach to health & safety is by being a leader himself; he remains an absolute professional at all times [from] taking a phone call and holding monthly foreman meetings, to his attention to detail while hosting any of his numerous training courses, ensuring that each employee has a thorough understanding of every aspect of the course and can walk away confident in what they have learned.

So opens the Nomination for Jason Loney, safety coordinator and site supervisor with Grand West Electric (GWE), whose form was sent in by office administrator Margaret Vandenberg, Jason’s “right-hand-person”.

“She helps me a lot with safety in the company, with file-keeping, helping me schedule things,” says Jason, with Anthony adding, “She’s imperative to Jason’s success; she tracks down everyone and makes sure everyone submits all their forms, and she stays on top of people from an administrative end.”

Jason is GWE’s first safety officer; he is continuously upgrading his knowledge by taking various courses, then sharing this knowledge with his co-workers and the company. By encouraging all employees



Jason Loney (right), safety coordinator and site supervisor with Grand West Electric (GWE), Individual category winner, along with Chad McIntyre, representing category sponsor I-Gard, specialists in high-resistance grounding.

PHOTO BY DAVID OLECKO PHOTOGRAPHY.

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to voice their opinion, the safety program constantly updates forms, policies and procedures to guarantee everyone goes home safe.

Jason started with GWE in April 2007. “I was as green as you could get. It wasn’t until a few years later I met one of my great mentors, Carl Savard, and he inspired me and started mentoring me into this position.”

When Jason first met Carl—who was brought in as a third-party consultant—he noticed how seriously Jason took safety. That’s some testament to the power of mentorship, as Jason has been doing this safety gig

solo for the last several years. “It’s great that I had him as a mentor, and a company that helped me flourish in this respect.”

“He’s very dedicated,” adds Anthony. “On several occasions he’s had Learn-a-Thons in our shop where he’ll bring in anybody that needs training on, say, fall protection, scissor-lift, or whatever.” And he’ll do this on his time on a Saturday, notes Anthony. “He donates his Saturdays for safety. That’s dedicated.”

One of the things they’ve done in conjunction with sister company All West Electric in British Columbia—with full support of upper management—is taken several apprentices, put them through certain training and mentoring, then had them join Jason in a safety committee and, together, perform site visits and audits, and talk about training and PPE requirements. “It’s a great way to get everyone in the company involved.”

How does Jason get buy-in from GWE’s workforce, which ranges from roughly 115 peak to around 80? “Not only am I the safety guy, but I’m also a Red Seal electrician and I run my own site. So I know exactly what they go through. I’m not just someone reading out of a book.”

“When I do site visits or inspections, or talk to the guys, I’m not there to tell them how to run their site. What I will do is just focus on safety. They understand that, and respect that,” Jason adds.

“There’s no feeling Jason is there to police them. He’s there as support. People aren’t afraid of him. He’s one of them,” Anthony adds.

Jason says the company encourages near miss reporting so they can spot trends. “Our No. 1 goal is always prevention... trying to be proactive rather than reactive. We encourage employees to come forward and tell us what happened. What can we do better as a company overall to prevent such a thing from occurring again?”

“A lot of people coming into the company can’t believe the standards that we have,” says Jason, proudly, noting that, “In the long-run, if you don’t have buy-in from the very top of your company, the whole system will fall apart.”

“You want to make sure that everyone gets home safe, and that safety is taken seriously,” says Anthony. “Jason

has succeeded in bringing GWE to a very safe working environment for all employees,” Margaret adds.

“I definitely want to thank Anthony Dallazanna, Gabriel Rosati, Margaret Vanderberg, and management and staff at GWE, as well as our Safety Committee, and Carl Savard for being a such great mentor to me.”

Well done, Jason, and the team that surrounds and supports you.

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR WINNER: Nixon Electrical Service Ltd. (Moosomin, Sask.)

I have worked for many contractors, but none who put safety over profit like Dale [Nixon]. I am honoured to work for such a great company.

That was one of the statements that caught our attention in the Nomination for Nixon Electrical. When we contacted Nixon, they were surprised to learn they been entered in the awards program. It turns out the employee above—so impressed with the company’s attitude toward safety—had nominated them, totally catching owner Dale Nixon and safety officer Ms. Jody Belhumeur by surprise. The employee wrote:

As an employee of Nixon Electrical, I have seen nothing but commitment for safety from owner Dale. He provided dispensing machines for all safety equipment, including cut-proof gloves, safety glasses, etc. He has two full-time safety officers and implemented the highest safety procedures, including a reward program for safe employees.

“I know he really cares about his employees,” explains Jody. “One of the strongest things Dale and I feel about is prevention—being proactive with our safety. We have a very strong near miss program, and both of us feel it is because of this that we haven’t had any major incidents or medicals or anything like that over the past three or four years.”

“We really support the guys when something *could have happened* over the course of their day,” Jody says, whether it’s a dropped object, forgetting their PPE, etc., “by encouraging them to fill out a Near Miss form.”

A few years ago, she and Dale would randomly pick a near miss



Dale Nixon with wife Patty Jo.

PHOTO COURTESY NIXON ELECTRICAL SERVICE LTD.

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every month and award a prize. “And the reports would become something we would talk about at our monthly meetings, so that everyone is aware,” Jody adds.

As time went on, to mix things up a little bit, Dale and Jody challenged the guys to submit four near misses a month, and those names would be put into a random draw for two airfare tickets anywhere in Canada. “It was pretty awesome,” says Jody.

She admits that, when new guys come aboard, they are hesitant to share their near misses, “but after being here for a month or two, they see it’s a positive thing... you’re not going to get into trouble because you dropped a screwdriver from a lift”. She and Dale also use the same form to encourage sharing ideas that just make good safety sense, and to report “interventions” (for example, when an employee reminds another to put on his safety glasses).

Nixon Electrical Service Ltd. was founded in 1994 as a one-man service company working in the oil patch in Alberta before becoming established in Moosomin. The company now has several locations through the province, with a workforce ranging from 34 to 50+ tradesmen. They are also a member of ISN (ISNetworld connects clients “with safe and reliable contractors”).

And the company is proud of its commitment to safety, with its daily toolbox meetings, weekly and monthly safety meetings, additional training and courses for specific equipment and workplaces, and more.



Anthony Capkun, editor of Electrical Business Magazine (left), Horizon Utility's president & CEO, Max Cananzi (centre), and Kathy Lurette, VP Utility Operations. PHOTO BY HORIZON STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER.

“Anyone working for Nixon will carry this safety culture with him to their next venture,” wrote the nominating employee. “I believe that Nixon’s safety practices are contagious, and any employee leaving the company will pass them along to their new workplace.”

Now *that’s* the kind of contagion we like hearing about!

ELECTRIC UTILITY WINNER: Horizon Utilities Corp. (Hamilton, Ont.)

This year’s Utility category champion, Horizon, was the first electric utility to achieve certification under CSA Z1000 “Occupational health & safety management”. For a utility that has demonstrated leadership in advancing electrical safety knowledge and awareness for years, we asked them why Z1000 certification was important.

“We were already very focused on safety in the organization, but we didn’t really have an overall management tool to manage all our health & safety and wellness initiatives,” explains Kathy Lurette, VP utility operations, who notes Z1000 gives them the framework they like, while Horizon’s internal audit team keeps them “on their toes”.

“We’ve seen some huge improvements in things like housekeeping across our organization,” Kathy says, adding their high-risk workforce has a standard process for doing risk assessments, with easy access to the

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information they need to execute work safely.

The strength of this system is its focus on promoting physical, mental and social well-being of employees, while protecting them from adverse workplace conditions. The Z1000 standard follows the Plan-Do-Check-Act model, which aids in building an effective Occupational Health & Safety Management System (OHSMS).

Leading up to the final Z1000 accreditation audit in 2015, Horizon’s safety efforts were validated with an Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA) President’s Award for achieving a significant safety milestone: 750,000 hours without a Lost-Time Injury. Its highest achievement, however, came in 2013, when the utility hit 2.5 million hours without a Lost-Time Injury.

“We really mean it when we say our employees are our No. 1 asset, and that’s why safety is of No. 1 importance. We really do want everyone to home at the end of the day in good shape to their families.”

Horizon believes in extending the safety message beyond its walls, as evidenced by its robust Contractor Management Program, which minimizes risks by providing the necessary tools for both Horizon to ensure contractors achieve qualification compliance and for it to effectively manage contractors/suppliers on the job. Horizon also invites local contractors to annual powerline safety seminars

targeting worker safety on the jobsite.

“We treat contractors like we treat our employees. They have to work to the same standard, same work procedures, same rules as our internal workforce,” says Kathy.

But there are other contractors to consider, she notes, like those working around Horizon’s equipment. “We saw a need to do an annual contractor safety seminar for people like roofers, crane operators, homebuilders, etc., to review the electrical hazards they will face on a daily basis, because we do still have people, for example, running into our overhead lines, not keeping 10-ft away, and so on. That’s been very well received.”

Also among Horizon’s initiatives is the Back2Basics program. As name implies, it refreshes workers on the basics of things like job planning and the EUSA Rulebook (Electrical & Utility Safety Association). “It’s important that, when everyone shows up for work, they have a tailboard meeting, a job plan that everyone understands, and they execute the job as planned,” Kathy says. “If something in the job changes, then stop and re-plan the work.”

Near miss reporting is also very important to Horizon, which they’ve supported for many years. “Our theory is the more near miss reports you have, the better.” And, like our other champs, the reports are not used to reprimand or embarrass, but to educate and improve.

Sometimes it’s the little things that jump out at you as not being so little after all. For example, Horizon conducted a Driver Rodeo to help its drivers better understand their work trucks: where they can drive them, where they will not fit, how to back up safely and how to watch for pedestrians and bystanders... particularly curious children.

“In the old days, people in the line trade always used to say ‘It takes too much time’ to work safely and work to all the rules, but we’re saying that’s absolutely not the case,” Kathy contends. “If you don’t work safely and there’s an incident, your productivity suffers greatly and the job takes longer. When you job plan properly, your productivity goes way up.”

Well done, Horizon. Here’s to the next million+ hours without a Lost-Time Injury! **EB**