

Q&A

with

*IEC-CNA
Award*

*Safety
Winner:*

LeMay

Electric

By Laurie Montanus

IEC member LeMay Electric knows a thing or two about safety, as they are an IEC-CNA Safety Award recipient. The IEC-CNA Safety Award is designed to recognize electrical contractors who place safety as a high priority in their organization and have the results to prove it. With an Experience Modification Rating (EMR) of .80 over the past four years and a solid safety program, LeMay certainly takes safety to the next level.

Tom LeMay of LeMay Electric discusses his success with safety

Montanus: How long has LeMay Electric been in business?

LeMay: LeMay Electric, Inc. has been in continuous operation in the Atlanta, Georgia, marketplace since 1983. This year, 2012, marks our 29th year in business!

Montanus: Have you and/or your workers ever experienced a bad accident/injury on the job?

LeMay: The most serious incident our company has been exposed to was this past summer, in 2011, where the mechanical contractor at one of our projects was using a scissor lift as a hoist for spiral duct. Unfortunately, the scissor lift tipped over and the worker on board fell to his death. Standard operating procedure calls for an immediate call to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), resulting in a shut down of the job for investigation. OSHA found no standing violations on this job site where the general contractor had a comprehensive and well enforced site specific safety program in place.

An unfortunate consequence of this incident was that blood had made its way, unnoticed, through expansion joints in the concrete slab to a switch gear located in an electrical room on the floor directly below. Three days after the incident, our workers were working in and over the top of this gear in preparation of wire pulling operations and three of our workers were exposed to this dried blood before it was discovered. The exposed workers underwent on-going blood tests over a several-month period to insure that there would be no long term impact from workplace bloodborne pathogens.

The construction industry presents hazardous conditions daily and 360 degree situational awareness and continuous observation is required to mitigate potential danger. We have learned that the one thing all accidents have in common is that they are preventable. With that in mind, it is most important to thoroughly investigate all accidents, regardless of severity, to learn what could have been done to prevent them from happening.

We have always been made more aware of and have learned additional preventative measures from post incident investigations to assist in education for all of the employees of our company.

Montanus: What prompted you to take safety seriously?

LeMay: In today's market, most contractors require a good safety program. You have to embrace it, preach it, walk with it, and keep it in mind at all times to be safe. In our fledgling years, we had an incident where a painter's ladder fell, hitting and injuring one of our electricians. Back at this time, it affected our EMR to a level where we were cancelled by our insurance company. This was a wakeup call for me

personally, and safety has remained a high priority development initiative in our company ever since.

Montanus: What was the process LeMay Electric took in developing a sound safety plan?

LeMay: LeMay's program did not happen overnight. Our safety program has and continually is being developed and improved. OSHA requirements, insurance company recommendations, and the stringent requirements of many quality general contractors are constantly prompting us to look at all aspects of safety more closely.

Our safety program was created to better serve both our internal and external customers. It is a form of communication so everyone will know what to expect. Our program starts at new employee orientation and is continuously reviewed by our safety committee and updated as needed to reflect our current safety practices and policies. Project managers, safety committee members, foremen, journeymen, apprentices, and the safety director all have input in developing and maintaining the safety standards for our company. Our company website has an employee area for safety communications including our OSHA Logs, safety program, handbook, work descriptions, and continuous updates.

Montanus: Describe the safety culture at your shop.

LeMay: Our safety culture is a direct product of our company motto that states, "Let's give our customers one less thing to worry about." We want to provide the best possible product for our customers and that includes having educated, well-informed employees. Safety training is an ongoing process that includes weekly tool-box topics, weekly reports of near misses, in-house presentations, and continuing education classes through various sources including our local IEC chapter, IEC Atlanta. All of our project managers, superintendents, and field employees have, at minimum, an OSHA 10 Hour card. We have an OSHA 500 trainer on staff and we actively seek out innovative safety techniques and Personal Protective Equipment. The growth of safety awareness in the construction industry as a whole has been aided by the information age and advances in technology. The average electrician is more aware now of safety hazards and regulations than in the past 20 years. We also try to emphasize that we should work 'smart,' and take the extra steps to ensure that you and your fellow workers get home safely every day.

As part of our safety training, we also give a presentation on the costs, direct and hidden, of accidents and injuries on the job. This helps to deepen the understanding of the importance of not taking risks and following good safety practices.

Prevention of an accident is:

- Pro Employee
- Pro Family, and
- Keeps the cost of doing business lower, which is better for everyone!

Montanus: What safety aspect/practice implemented at LeMay Electric are you most proud of, and why?

LeMay: There is not any one practice that we are most proud of, but rather, the involvement of our entire team. We have worked together as a group in continuous development of our safety program, we have participated in company-wide safety training, particularly the time our entire work force came together to become OSHA 10 certified, and set the bar for minimum safety training. Our foreman and project managers stepped up for additional training to hold OSHA 30 certification and on-going certifications in power lifts, industrial trucks, confined space, lockout-tag-out, vehicle operation safety, assured grounding, and many other programs.

Additionally, our Weekly Safety Planner is a resource tool for all personnel to review and inspect each job site on an on-going basis. Each person on the job will have the opportunity to walk and inspect the job to identify and report his/her finding to the foremen so potential hazards can be corrected before our work takes us to those areas. A person with limited experience is paired with a qualified person to learn more about what to look for in potential safety hazards. The findings are documented and communicated in weekly job-site safety meetings, where all workers acknowledge and are made aware of these findings.

Montanus: What advice would you give to other IEC members in regards to improving their safety programs?

LeMay: Safety is a skill, an attitude, and a trait that will never be mastered but must be practiced, learned, and taught. The investment provides enormous returns in a healthy, productive workforce with good morale, lower insurance rates, and a high degree of competency: a winning combination for any contractor. Having a continuously reviewed and active safety plan assures everyone that they have a safe place to go to work. And this is "The Goal."

Montanus: Any parting words?

LeMay: In today's market you cannot afford to *not* improve your safety program because every person and every dollar counts. Recognize, document, and mitigate the risk!

INSIGHTS

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