



PRESERVING SAFETY IN A TIGHT ECONOMY

*Portland manufacturer focuses
on employee involvement*

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RESOURCE

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On the cover: A welder at Gunderson, Inc., a rail car manufacturer in Portland.

Administrator's message:

Keeping faith and keeping focus

By Michael Wood

Like many employers and workers in Oregon, we here at Oregon OSHA have been facing a number of changes lately – some of our own making, some unexpected, but many of them unwelcome.

I am well into my sixth year as administrator, and during that time I have enjoyed a management team that has provided quite a bit of stability. However, on the heels of Sue Kailey's departure from her permanent role as the consultation and outreach manager to become the deputy administrator of the Insurance Division, Sam Drill announced his retirement as the safety enforcement manager. So at this very moment, we are recruiting to fill two of our three executive management positions with direct responsibility for the delivery of our field activities. We wish both Sue and Sam well – but I'm going to miss them.

Of course, others have had less choice about leaving Oregon OSHA – or at least their positions in the organization. As I have written before, we have been forced to lay off staff throughout the organization because of the shortfall in available revenue. Among those we lost was long-time Oregon OSHA leader David Sparks, whose position as quality assurance manager was eliminated. As a result, David has taken on the challenge of managing the enforcement division at the Oregon Health Licensing Agency.

These changes – and many of the other departures we have experienced in recent months – are not changes I welcome. We have lost staff to other employment opportunities, as well as to layoff. With each loss, we lose not only capacity, but also a wealth of learning, of experience, and of perspective.

I know that other employers throughout Oregon are experiencing the same sort of challenges. On one level, of course, it's just the normal course of events: things change. But those changes have been accelerated in many places, as they have at Oregon OSHA, by the ongoing economic challenges we face.

But change, even unwelcome change, brings opportunity as well. We are finding ways to do the job better. And we'll take those lessons with us as the economy rebounds. We are filling a few of the positions that have been vacated – and that will bring new perspectives and new energy to some key roles.

In the midst of it all, we're working very hard to keep our eye on the ball. It is easy, when we are buffeted by changes, to lose sight of the fundamentals. But for all of us, not just at Oregon OSHA but also throughout the Oregon workplace safety and health community, it remains the fundamentals that really matter.

We do important work. We have a proud history of doing that work well. And we have a firm responsibility to continue to do that work well as we move toward the future, whatever it may hold. As we look to 2011 – and as we look to 2021 – it is that responsibility that matters most. And if we keep our focus, then more workers will go home at the end of the day and at the end of their careers with their lives and health intact. That's a goal worth striving toward, come what may.



Michael Wood, Administrator



*Portland manufacturer focuses
on employee involvement*

By Melanie Mesaros

Three years ago, when the nation became all too familiar with the word “recession,” Portland’s Gunderson Inc. was feeling the impact, too. The rail car manufacturer saw orders drop, layoffs were made, and daily shifts were missing the hustle of more profitable times. But one thing that did not change was the company’s focus on safety and health.

“Whether we have 1,200 or 600 employees, we still have the same programs in place,” said Greg Miller, Gunderson’s health and safety manager.

In 2008, the company was forced to lay off two people in safety positions. At the same time, Gunderson has kept



(Left to right): Matt Svaglic, Greg Miller, Emanuel Vieru, and Matias Perez discuss a safety matter in the plant.

accidents down, even as production orders are now recovering. Between September 2006 and August 2010, Gunderson saw an 82 percent reduction in the number of man-hours worked but had an 87 percent decrease in recordable injuries.

"I deal mostly with what happens after people are hurt," Miller said. "I know when you start cutting on safety, you are going to have costly claims and we want to avoid the accident in the first place."

The company has focused on employee involvement. Matt Svaglic, Gunderson's full-time safety and industrial hygiene specialist, said foreign bodies in the eye, along with sprains and strains, are their top recordable injuries. He believes staying in front of accidents begins with making safety a shared responsibility.

"The more the shop is involved, the more empowered they will be to champion safety improvements," Svaglic said. "Production is important and safety is important; both must remain in balance with one another. You can't just emphasize one. Instead of relying on employees only for production purposes, start relying on them for safety impact as well."



Robert Parker operates a cutting table.

Along with employee involvement, management has made it a priority to be transparent. Once a month, accidents and near-miss incidents are discussed in an open forum with top managers and supervisors.

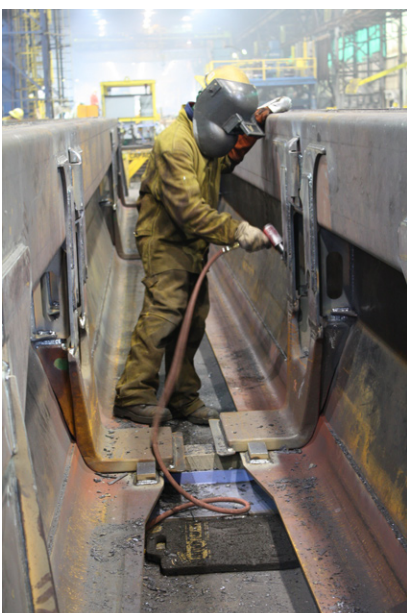
"Supervisors have the responsibility to raise their hand and say, 'We are going to work with the company to fix whatever problems we see,'" said Miller.

Miller also said the company is committed to training and other engineering controls that may help with an issue. Just a few months ago, 60 workers were pulled off the production floor for torch training after a worker suffered a hand burn.

"We are all collective in solving problems and not assigning blame," said Miller.

Scott Eave, Gunderson's vice president of human resources, understands the risks their workers face and makes time to sit in on the monthly supervisory meetings.

"We are all collective in solving problems and not assigning blame,"
— Greg Miller



Nouane Southep works inside a rail car with a rattle gun.



A worker adds lettering to a finished rail car off the line.

"It's a very sobering idea that someone may come to work here and may not go home," he said. "Other plants that do what we do have had deaths in the past year."

Connecting with small businesses

By Ellis Brasch

Small business is big in Oregon. Seventy-six percent of businesses in the state have 20 or fewer employees and nearly half have fewer than five employees. Is Oregon's largest business segment "preserving safety" in a tight economy?

The owner of one of Oregon's 400-plus wineries offered the following assessment: "I'm working 24/7 just to keep up with paperwork and run this business. But I get worried every time I see one of my employees climb up a ladder." Although she had good reason to be concerned – disabling claims costs from falls from ladders average more than \$37,000 – what really worried her was being inspected and fined by "OSHA."

While small business owners are accustomed to taking risks, most wouldn't be willing to risk their employees' safety. The problem is that many small business owners may not know how to reduce those risks. So, they worry about being fined and inspected. For many, when they think about safety, the first question that comes to mind is, "What do I have to do to comply?" That's an important question, but are they getting the right answers? Of course, there's more to safety than just compliance. Identifying hazards, developing a safety policy, and allocating safety resources are also important elements of a strong safety program. Larger employers have safety directors to accomplish these things, but what can small business owners do?



Here are two options:

Ask your workers' compensation insurance carrier for help. Your carrier can assist you by evaluating your workplace for hazards, explain the safety and health rules that apply, and work with you to develop a safety and health program. All at no charge — but you have to request these services. To learn more, read the Oregon OSHA brochure, [Are you getting loss prevention services from your workers' compensation insurance carrier?](#)

Ask Oregon OSHA for help. Oregon OSHA's [Consultative Services](#) section has consultants who can show you the workplace safety rules you need to know, help you identify hazards, and set up an effective safety program. There's no charge and consultations are confidential and separate from the Enforcement section. You don't have to worry about being "inspected and fined."

New business owners and anyone else who wants to know more about what's necessary to ensure a safe workplace should also check out Oregon OSHA's [Tools of the Trade](#). This mini website explains what you need to do to comply with Oregon OSHA's rules and offers tips on how to manage an effective safety program.

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Accident Report

Accident type | Crushed

Industry | Construction

Employee job title | Journeyman rigger



The victim signaled to the crane operator to start lifting a pallet full of slab grabs (upright metal stanchions for guardrail system). According to witnesses, as the pallet reached approximately 15 feet from the ground, the pallet broke away from the sling, sending materials falling to the ground. The victim was standing below the lift and was hit directly by the falling material, which covered him. Employees observing the incident immediately went to the area and began removing the debris off the victim's body. Employees immediately called 911 and provided basic first aid and assisted the victim.

The victim remained in an induced coma for five weeks. His injuries included a broken pelvis, internal damage to his spleen, broken bones in legs, a head injury, and a back injury.



A pallet loaded with slab grabs.

Poor housekeeping practices around the hoisting area.



Items cited:

1926.21(b)(2)

The employer shall instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury.

1926.550(a)(19)

All employees shall be kept clear of loads about to be lifted and of suspended loads.

1926.250(c)

Storage areas shall be kept free from accumulation of materials that constitute hazards from tripping, fire, explosion, or pest harborage. Vegetation control will be exercised when necessary.

Oregon OSHA issues alert to salons using hair-smoothing products

Oregon OSHA issued an alert to Oregon hair salons in October about the presence of formaldehyde in products used to smooth or straighten hair.

Oregon OSHA's testing of more than 100 product samples from more than 50 Oregon salons confirmed significant levels of formaldehyde in products labeled "formaldehyde free." Oregon OSHA also monitored the air in several salons to assess the effect on workers.

"Although it's not clear whether the regulatory level of airborne exposure would be exceeded based on our results, it is clear that the levels are high enough to cause concern," said Michael Wood, Oregon OSHA administrator. "And it is certainly clear that the amount of formaldehyde in many of these products is high enough to trigger the requirements of OSHA's formaldehyde rules."

Oregon OSHA is advising salons that use hair-smoothing treatments, particularly those referred to as "Keratin-based," to take necessary precautions outlined in Oregon OSHA's formaldehyde rule. According to the



rule, employers using products containing formaldehyde must provide information and training to workers and they must conduct air monitoring to ensure workers are not exposed to levels above the permissible limit. The hazard alert contains more information and guidance and is available at www.oroSHA.org/pdf/hazards/2993-26.pdf.



For more details of the sampling results and to view the complete report, go to www.oroSHA.org/pdf/Final_Hair_Smoothing_Report.pdf.

Oregon OSHA recruits for two senior managers

Oregon OSHA is seeking applicants for two senior management positions. The first, the agency's safety field operations manager, is responsible for directing the day-to-day activities of Oregon OSHA's safety enforcement staff. The manager also formulates and recommends changes in policies, procedures, or program directives affecting the enforcement program.

The Oregon OSHA consultation and public education manager position is also open. The position involves directing and managing activities of Oregon OSHA's consultation and outreach program. The manager also oversees the agency's public education staff, policies, and other program directives within consultation.

Both positions are open until Monday, Dec. 13, 2010. To apply, go to www.cbs.state.or.us/external/jobs/externalClasstitle.html.

Southern Oregon Conference celebrates 20 years

Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood kicked off the 20th annual Southern Oregon Safety and Health Conference in Medford on Oct. 20, 2010, with his keynote address. The event commemorated the 20th anniversary of the conference, sponsored by the Southern Oregon chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers.



The Randall Lundberg Award recognizes an outstanding safety and health program. Eaton Hydraulics won in the small employer category, while Knife River was the large employer recipient. The STARS award for improved accident rate was also given to Eaton Hydraulics (small employer),

Adroit Construction (medium employer), and Knife River (large employer). Other awards were given to companies in the safety committee category.

The conference also included sessions on safe spray finishing, driving safety, and successful safety committee operations.



A workplace safety and health tool kit for new employers and small business owners



Tools of the Trade

Why we're **HERE**

Managing **SAFETY**

Looking **FOR HAZARDS**

RECORDING **injuries**

Reporting **injuries**

Displaying **POSTERS**

Meeting **for SAFETY**

Training for **SAFETY**

Staying **INFORMED**

Our services

Our publications

Oregon OSHA

Our rules

Virtual toolkit created to help employers

Oregon OSHA's Tools of the Trade is a new website for employers and small business owners. With just a few mouse clicks, employers can learn the basics about Oregon OSHA and how to keep employees safe. Some of the items covered include:

- Tips on managing safety and looking for hazards
- How to record and report injuries
- What information you need to post
- The importance of meeting and training for safety
- How to get help – from Oregon OSHA or an insurer

The toolkit is available online at
www.cbs.state.or.us/external/oshaworkkit/index.htm

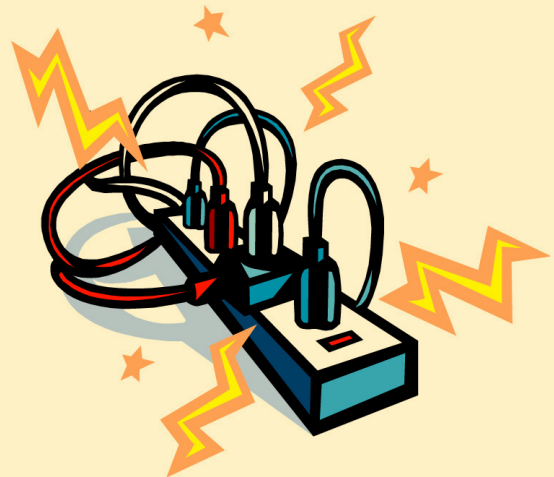
Ask Technical

Q: *After a recent Oregon OSHA inspection, the compliance officer left us with the impression that we may not plug two fused power strips into one duplex outlet. My understanding of the rule is that you can plug a UL-listed fused power strip into any open outlet, as long as you follow the UL listing for that device.*

A: *We have a rule that requires an employer to follow the listing and labeling on electrical equipment installed and used (rule 1910.303(b)(2)).*

Manufacturers and nationally recognized testing laboratories determine the proper uses for power strips. For example, the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) directory contains instructions that require UL-listed power strips, also referred as relocatable power taps (RPTs), to be directly connected to a permanently installed branch circuit receptacle; they are not to be series-connected to other RPTs or connected to extension cords. UL also specifies that RPTs are not intended for use at construction sites and similar locations.

Power strips are designed for use with a number of low-powered loads, such as computers, peripherals, or audio/video components. Power loads are addressed by **1910.304(b)(4), Outlet devices:** “Outlet devices shall have an ampere rating not less than the load to be served.” Power strips are not designed for high power loads such as space heaters, refrigerators, and microwave ovens, which can easily exceed the recommended ampere ratings on many power strips. They must also meet the requirements of **1910.305(g)(1), Use of flexible cords and cables.** For example, the flexible power cord is not to be routed through walls, windows, ceilings, floors, or similar openings.



Going the distance

Meet a leading Oregon health and safety professional



Company: Iwasaki Bros., Inc.
Health and safety manager: Kay Orsatti,
Human Resources Manager and Safety Officer
Workforce: 130 to 275 employees
Common Hazards: Strains and sprains, cuts and
bruises, potential chemical exposure

What is your background and safety philosophy?

I began my career 30 years ago working in refugee social services. I was a student at Portland State University studying foreign languages and wanted to find an opportunity to use the languages I was studying. We had to teach people who didn't speak English to find ways to work, live, and survive in a new country and environment. That experience changed my perspective forever. I had traveled and learned a little about the world, but to teach others to survive in my world made me see things in a whole new way.

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Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to know a variety of people and cultures, which has meant learning things from various perspectives. From this experience, I learned to truly value diversity. My philosophy about everything begins first with diversity. Diversity to me is seeing things from the largest number of perspectives and coming to a common goal. The study of diversity shows that if you put a group of people of very similar characteristics together to approach an issue, you will get very similar answers in response to a question. If, instead, you put together a group of people of varying education and backgrounds and ask them to come to a common agreement, it is far more likely that you will find more meaningful change. I believe in valuing all perspectives regardless of position.

Whether speaking about a safety or health program, any effort made toward prevention means less work on the back end. There is always a strong business argument in prevention because it generally means less expense in the end. There are tremendous challenges in creating an environment that truly embraces prevention.

What helped make the difference for us was enforcing the reporting of all incidents and injuries no matter how small. Once we got



Kay Orsatti (left) talks with the company's safety committee chair, Richard Asanza, inside a greenhouse.

the employees to believe that they would not be punished for reporting any and all scrapes and scratches, we were able to collect more meaningful information. It helped us see patterns before they became more serious and address root causes. We have a lot of chuckles when we review our monthly reports, which can at times include paper cuts. It may sound strange out of context, but in our environment, small cuts added to handling soil and other possible contaminants can mean an infection or other issue, which could become more serious. Our subcommittee that handles accident investigation is digging further and we're teaching our safety committee members to ask more questions and make more recommendations. Upper management is also engaging more in conversation with committee members.



Do you have examples of current projects with unique safety challenges?

A large percentage of our employees are foreign born and have grown up within cultures that have a very different perspective about safety. They are not accustomed to voicing a contrary or different point of view from management. This is considered unacceptable. Some have an actual fear of authority and of losing their jobs if they report injuries or unsafe situations. Our first challenge is to get our employees communicating.

As the migrant workforce moves and changes, we are looking for new opportunities to build our seasonal and year-round workforce. In that endeavor, we have partnered with organizations like IRCO (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization) to provide opportunities to those who can grow with our organization. This presents another communication challenge, which also affects safety. As our company becomes more multi-lingual, we need to be able to find new resources for communicating safety and providing training.



Rodolfo Reyes-Lopez puts together a fresh wreath. Employees work to make the wreaths quickly because they are paid by the piece.

We are also in the process of preparing for new offices. Although the new buildings are modular and constructed off site, we are handling much of the preparation ourselves. This is a new process for us. We move employees between departments as needs arise so we are working to assure retraining and readdressing many of the same safety issues. Keeping safety top of mind and keeping our approach fresh is an area we are still developing.

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Jose Torres attaches greenery to the wreath form and wears gloves to prevent needle pokes.



Yolanda Guzman cuts branches to be used in arrangements.



Alfredo Carmen Colin makes about 100 wreaths a day.

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Adrian Lule (right) shows off a finished wreath with Orsatti.

During a busy time like the holidays, how do you train seasonal workers? How do you balance production and working safety?

We begin our day with morning exercises. Every department participates in stretching that is designed to lessen the risk of repetitive injury or strains. This is also a time that each department can address any issues or training. We review mini-safety topics and discuss any arising concerns. As the new season begins, we review areas that we felt might have been the greatest risk in the previous seasons and make sure to train on prevention. Our safety committee works to bring up ideas before each season begins and come up with ideas on how to approach training.



Has the tight economy had any impact on your health and safety program?

The economy has impacted many portions of our business. However, we have an owner, Jim Iwasaki, who truly values each and every employee. Jim continues to up his commitment to the overall well-being of the company. Last year, we redesigned our health program and increased the percentage of company contribution, which brought our participation in health care to 97 percent. This serves as a foundation to our safety and productivity.

On the safety side, we have worked more closely with our partners. Our partnership with our insurer has been a tremendous boon to our safety training and overall safety program. Everyone has to do more with less, but having great partnerships gives us a stronger foundation.

What advice do you have for other safety and health managers hoping to make a difference?

I am a relative newcomer to the role of safety manager so I spend a great deal of time seeking the advice of others in the field. The success we've had has been with a significant investment working with our safety committee members and employees with an ongoing commitment to training. When in doubt, reach out to the experts in the field. If all else fails, go back to the basics and build from there. Every day is a new day with new challenges and new risks. You can never do it alone. It takes commitment from each and every member of the company. Safety is a learned behavior, but for many people, safety is relative, so seeing risk can be different for each person. Looking at risk from different vantage points and creating best practices that include varying views helps establish the best risk-management techniques. The most effective approach can sometimes come from the most surprising source, so never discount an idea.



Orsatti said sprains and strains associated with all the hard work are their top injuries.