

People Serving People



WORKPLACE HEALTH, SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION

2005 Annual Report



Three years ago D.F. Barnes Limited, the St. John's-based offshore, marine and industrial services company was added to the Commission's priority employer list. The company's claims costs were increasing considerably and so were their assessment rates. Basically, things were spiraling out of control and something had to be done to improve health and safety. Added to this, the relationship with the company and the Commission was not a good one. "I thought workers' compensation was the biggest rip-off in history," says Jerry Byrne, president of D.F. Barnes Limited. "The premiums we were paying were absolutely outrageous!"

The company was contacted by the Commission and offered the services of a health and safety adviser to work with them to develop a health and safety program, establishing a health and safety committee and monitor their progress on a go-forward basis.

D.F. Barnes Limited which had invested significant funds to position itself to bid on work in the province's offshore oil and gas industry, knew that if they didn't improve their health and safety record, their claims costs and assessment rates with the Commission would continue to rise. In addition, they felt they would risk significant contracts in an emerging industry that stressed safety as priority number one.

Alan Moores, safety advisor and Chris Rodgers, the Commission's Executive Director of Employer Services, worked with Jerry Byrne and Renna Fowler, the company's health and safety co-ordinator.

"Renna was a real motivator from a safety perspective," says Alan. "From the get-go, she was determined to improve the company's record and put a lot of work into bringing about positive change within the organization."

The company's hard work and perseverance in the area of improving health and safety paid off in 2005, when D.F. Barnes Limited received its 2006 assessment rate. "It had actually come down," Renna exclaims!

"Improving health and safety is our single biggest achievement," says Jerry. "We're not working on our own – the Commission is working with us to help bring down our rates and costs – it's a solid partnership, and that works for me."

Jerry also credits Chris Rodgers for introducing D.F. Barnes Limited to the PRIME program. "It makes sense and we bought into it. It is not like we had an option," says Jerry. "Rewarding employers for their successes is an excellent concept and it sounds like the Commission is on the right track. It is one of those times where being 'forced to change' actually paid off financially and with the big winner being our workers with dramatically fewer accidents."

D.F. Barnes Limited has gone from having one of the worst employer safety records in the province to having one of the best. Their assessment rates are coming down and the company's most recent accolade was having gone 447 days without a lost-time incident.

(left to right)
Jerry Byrne,
president of DF
Barnes and
Renna Fowler,
the company's
health and safety
co-ordinator



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