

Special handling

New enterprisewide safety effort under way

By Jennifer Cram

David Unruh is a wing and aft-body final assembly landing gear lead on the 787 Dreamliner program in Everett, Wash. He and his team understand how following workplace safety procedures plays a big role in doing their jobs right.

“Our ultimate goal is simple: It’s to go home every night just as safe and healthy as when we arrived,” he said.

To help Boeing employees work together to improve workplace safety, the company recently unveiled a new effort called Safety Now. Building on the environmental targets Boeing established in 2008, which helped align employees across the company to a single environmental purpose, Safety Now set an aggressive safety target: a 25 percent reduction in the number of injuries resulting in lost work (lost work day case rate) by 2013.

“A safe workplace is every employee’s right and a critical driver to help us increase our productivity and improve our performance,” said Mary Armstrong, Environment, Health and Safety vice president. “Only by having everyone working together—and working safely—can we continue to meet our customers’ expectations and deliver high-quality products and services.”

Safety Now will improve workplace safety through three key areas: employee and leadership involvement; a new company-wide safety management system; and targeted investments that improve the design of key manufacturing processes. “We must bring a tremendous level of intensity and focus to create injury-free workplaces at our operations,” said Doug Briggs, enterprise safety director, who’s leading a cross-functional team that will help drive workplace safety performance improvements throughout Boeing.

Over the next few months, Boeing will provide additional information and tools to help those on the front lines, who already hold regular safety discussions, identify potential safety risks and act to improve the safety of their workplaces. “Safety is demonstrated by example,” said Armstrong. “Active and visible safety leadership by each of us will help drive change.”

Teams also can use existing platforms such as Lean+ to help identify and eliminate safety and ergonomic risks. Training on how to embed environment, health and safety thinking into Lean+ is available on the Boeing intranet at http://leo.web.boeing.com/ProductService/EHS_Course.cfm.



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With the new common safety management system, the benefits to employees and the company are clear: one safety language, a consistent way to identify risk and shared expectations. For example, when employees move or change assignments, they won’t have to spend time learning a different safety system. The system also will comply with OHSAS 18001, an international standard for occupational health and safety, to help the company improve it continually. Other critical components of the safety effort include embedding ergonomics and safety principles early in the design of manufacturing processes and making targeted investments to improve high-risk manufacturing processes.

“We’re finding that the best incremental opportunities for enhancing workplace safety are in the areas of better tools and work platforms, improved fabrication and assembly processes and the handling of parts and materials. Engaging our people who do those tasks is the key,” said Sandy Postel, Commercial Airplanes vice president of Manufacturing & Quality.

And Boeing employees already are engaged. “We don’t take safety for granted,” said Jodi Thomas, office administrator at Ogden, Utah, an Integrated Defense Systems location that’s worked four million hours without an injury resulting in lost work.

“We have pockets of safety excellence. Many teams have gone years without a lost work day. By aligning these proven and effective practices into a single safety effort, we can set a new standard of safety performance throughout Boeing,” said Aileen Yankowski, Compliance and Services director for EHS. ■

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PHOTO: David Unruh (left), landing gear lead for the combined 787 wing assembly and aft-body final assembly teams, works with Jeff Garrett to prepare a 787 main landing drag brace. The team actively focuses on workplace safety, identifying safety risks and holding regular safety discussions. GAIL HANUSA/BOEING