

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

Abby Greer November 5, 2024

The "Safety Spotlight" feature of The Green Light II shines the spotlight on safety professionals to gain insight into their background, and their thoughts and ideas on safety in our industry.

Meet Jim Hickey, HSE Manager for B&H Heavy Haul in Monroe, Georgia. Jim began his career in safety in 2013, after more than 30 years in the public safety sector. He is passionate about Safety and proud of his B&H Heavy Haul team...

How did you get started in Safety?

My journey in safety started indirectly in 1983 as I began a 24-year career as a Firefighter/EMT in Gwinnett County, Ga. After retiring from Gwinnett in 2008, I attended the North Georgia Police Academy and served five years as a sheriff's deputy in a rural

Georgia community answering call for service and then serving as a school resource officer for two years. I saw first-hand many tragic outcomes due to those not practicing safety at home or in the workplace. Both of those two professions were mainly reactive to situations. In 2013, I began employment as a Safety Compliance Supervisor with an underground gas utility installer in metro Atlanta. My responsibilities ranged from new hire orientations, performing job site compliance audits, training and testing field workers on operator qualifications for related job tasks.

What do you view as the main duties of a Safety Director?

Realizing that safety is basically defined as "freedom from risk" and is predominantly driven by human behavior, my primary role is to educate our team on risk reward behaviors. We emphasize situational awareness to our driver team and identify potential hazards that can cause harm to people. Alliance Interstate Risk orientation process has further emphasized the employee and employer responsibilities regarding risk mitigation. We have incorporated it now as a critical part of our orientation process. We realize that our commitment to safety encompasses not just our team but the traveling public and the communities that we travel through. Consistency from my desk is a focus, achieving continued improvement that is measured over time while maintaining the capacity to absorb failures that occur.



James Hickey

ed Devils

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT *continued*

Why is Safety important to you?

Having mentioned earlier, I have seen my share of unfortunate outcomes, many tragic, by those either not practicing safety or those individuals who were victims of unsafe behaviors of others. From my seat, safety encompasses all aspects of our organization. Far too many organizations fail to place safety as the highest level when listing their goals and objectives. I am a disciple of Paul Oneil, who was CEO of ALCOA and served as Treasury Secretary under President George W. Bush. Here is the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world that begins his stockholders' meetings by discussing safety incident rates at ALCOA. At first, shareholders were confused and upset by his method. Over time they came to realize the importance of safety. Paul realized that safety drives production and profitability as ALCOA's incident rates diminished, and profits rose dramatically. Safety creates internal team confidence and demonstrates accountability to current and potential customers. At B&H we do not budget safety, I have been very fortunate to work with an owner that realizes safety's role in attaining operational success.

What has been the most challenging task in your role/career as a Safety Director?

Complacency, especially when organizational successes have been achieved. We all know that success in any industry can be short-lived and taken away in a split second by an individual's poor decision. Responsiveness in processing crash investigations, utilizing root cause analysis to identify and correct driver behaviors are just some of challenging realities of my job. There is one constant in life and that is change and our industry is changing constantly, and we must adapt to that change and provide our drivers with every opportunity for success through the education process. Failures will happen, it is human nature, so how we learn from failure and apply those lessons defines us as a company. Our focus is to turn past failures into successful learning opportunities and communicate that information to our team.

How do you promote your company's safety culture? How do you get employees to "buy in" or get involved?

The foundation of our safety culture starts at the top, is leadership driven and employee owned. Communication with our team by various methods is one key component to driving our safety cultures' employee involvement. Listening to driver and employee concerns while entertaining their ideas helps provide a foundational basis for our safety culture. Our experienced team of drivers recognizes our commitment to not only their personal safety, but how B&H adds meaning and purpose to their family's life.

We share CSA scores monthly and identify areas of improvement in these seven basic categories. We issue industry specific video training biweekly with 100% testing accuracy, weekly toolbox talks, and monthly industry based informational flyers. Each department head provides input, positive or negative, regarding driver performance, that affects monetary incentives for rewarding safe behaviors. We use the word integrity often, referring to all that we do, from pre-trip inspections to load securement to the eventual customer experience. Henry Ford was once asked, what if we train them and they leave? His response, what if we don't and they stay.