

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

Abby Greer May 8, 2023

Our newest feature to The Green Light II shines the spotlight on Safety Directors throughout our programs to gain insight into not only their background, but also their thoughts and ideas on safety in our industry.

Meet Scott Godbee, Safety/HR Director for Pitts & Sons, Inc., a Saraland, Alabama-based towing and recovery service that has been in business since 1948. Scott joined the Pitts & Sons team in 1996 and has been Safety Director for 15 years. He is also a member of the ATA Comp Fund/Alliance Interstate Risk Risk Management Advisory Committee (RMAC), a panel of representatives from all over the industry that meet to discuss trends and changes in safety.



How did you get started in Safety?

About 15 years ago, I was asked by the owner of our company if I would be willing to create and implement a safety program. I had no previous experience leading a safety department, but I had worked previously at other jobs where I participated in their safety programs, so I used that experience as a template to get started. Being a Towing and Recovery Service, I haven't known many towing companies with a dedicated safety program, so the challenge was indeed a tall order!

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

I think that most people believe that a Safety Director's job is to be a "Safety Cop", and with that mindset they are more apt to 'appear' safety minded when the "Cop" is around and let their guard down when no one is watching. I think a Safety Director should be a minister of the safety gospel. To instill a safety ideology that is practiced even when no one is watching.

Why is safety important to you?

Hence the name, *safety* is a guideline that we all follow daily, whether we realize it or not. We all learned the value of being safe when we were kids after touching that hot pot on the stove when mom had told us not to. I want my people to go home in BETTER shape than they were when they arrived. "Better" in that they have acquired valuable knowledge that they didn't previously have.

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

I work for a Towing and Recovery Service where opportunities for disaster are much greater than a normal transportation company. Driving is just a small part of a Towing Operator's day to day tasks. Their environment changes rapidly and without notice. They might be performing a textbook tow of a broken-down vehicle one minute, and the next minute they find themselves on the side of a busy roadway, working to upright a fully loaded tractor/trailer, which is rife with dangerous possibilities. I am constantly reminding my drivers that they must stay focused every second of the day. This is absolutely no place for complacency.

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

I like to joke that I strive to have "Church" during my safety meetings. To preach the gospel of safety and to make my congregation believers. I also try and engage with each person on a personal level, to get into their heads when we discuss best safety practices. I have found that everyone has different characters and personalities, and that just broadcasting a message en mass doesn't always work for everyone. In short, some folks need special attention and one on one conversation is needed.

What advice do you wish you had received early in your Safety career? What advice would you give to someone who is starting out in their Safety role?

Some days this is the easiest job in the world, and others it can be the hardest.

It is difficult to not take it personally when a safety incident occurs, and they will occur. You must remind yourself that even though you offer the training, tools, and knowledge to someone to be safe, that complacency is and always will be your biggest adversary. You must be willing and able to adapt to an ever-changing social climate that directly affects everyone at all times. What worked 10 years ago, doesn't necessarily work today and you've got to remain diligent.

What would be your "safety quote" or "safety message" that you want to share?

"Take 2 to think it through". Before taking on a task, be it preparing to leave on a trip or recovering a loaded tractor/trailer from a ditch, take 2 minutes to play out the scenario in your mind and make a plan on how to safely proceed. This job is like a chess game and it's best to think 2 moves ahead at all times.