

TMI Forest Products

Morton, Washington – Member Since November 2004



The TMI Forest Products mill sits in a quaint valley in the town of Morton, Washington, between Mt. Rainer and Mt. Saint Helens. Over 60 years ago, Morton was considered the “Tie Capital of the World,” because the area mills manufactured railroad ties for the railroad industry. However, the Tubafor Mill changed its production to 2X4s for the construction industry, thus the name Tubafor! In the late 1960s, Tubafor Mill began manufacturing Western Red Cedar fencing material, mostly posts and rails. By the mid 1970s they moved towards the exclusive production of Western Red Cedar fence boards, eventually curtailing post and rail production entirely. The Probyn Group purchased the Morton sawmill in 1978 and changed the name to TMI Forest Products which has since grown into a large manufacturing company.



An aerial view of TMI Forest Products in Morton, Washington.



Levi Owens, Safety Committee Chairperson on swing-shift. Notice the sign in the background - 251 days accident free.

With large growth, the manufacturing company experienced its share of problems – one of which was safety. In a small operation the staff member who handles Human Resources can often find themselves handling Safety also. This was the case at TMI. Sally Clark, Human Resources Manager, found herself “putting out fires” and reacting to accidents and issues instead of proactively preventing accidents and training employees. She would look up the codes and then have to decipher what the WACs actually said in relation to safety. She knew a change was needed before a tragic accident or fatality occurred.

A request was made to the General Manager and CEO to hire a Safety Specialist, someone who knew the codes and compliance regulations. Management recognized the importance of Sally’s request and the need for someone to focus on safety.

In the winter of 2009, Hampton Lumber (a neighboring sawmill) lost its planer building due to its collapse under heavy snow. The planer was closed for nine months and the Safety Coordinator, Brian Wamsley was let go. Brian was a well-known community

member. He attended school with many of the TMI employees making his work ethic and personality known commodities. He had established a record of success at the neighboring sawmill and made an outstanding candidate for the new TMI position.

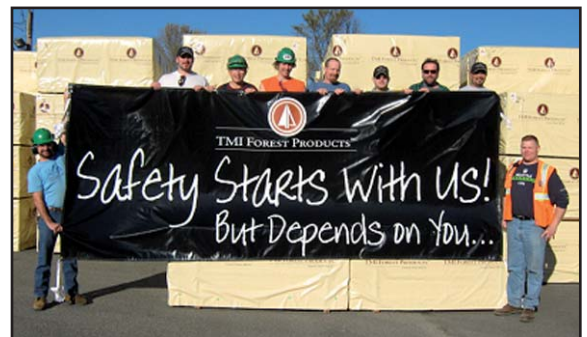
Sally Clark said, “We have never regretted having Brian on-board, building our safety program into what it is today. He leads strongly by example and knowledge and is respected by the management team and our production and maintenance staff as well.”



Visitors must use proper PPE too. Congresswoman, Jamie Herrea, listens intently to Howard Hoffman.

When Brian evaluated the condition of the Safety Program he found the mill to be labor intensive which led to the development of many barriers to safety. Production was the top priority at the time. General Manager, Mike Pedersen, and Operations Manager, Howard Hoffman, were 100% on-board to move forward in the area of safety and they began to systematically eliminate constraints and barriers, improving processes and dramatically reducing the injury rate.

An excellent safety committee was established first. Then they started the culture change with a thorough Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) Program. All crew members were provided the correct equipment, all conveyor and transfer equipment in the mill were labeled and a written LOTO procedure established. With the LOTO Program in place, all staff were trained extensively.



TMI Safety Team dedicated to safety! Developing motivational reminders has been effective in keeping safety on the forefront of the employees workday.



Comact Operator James Collette runs boards through the grade scanner.

Employees have taken ownership and pride in the Safety Program. Every employee knows that they are responsible for themselves and their crew members. Because of their response to the training and each other, there has been a positive shift in the safety culture at TMI.

New employees are required to go-through an extensive training and orientation. Each new employee receives several hours of “paper” orientation which reviews safety requirements and procedures. A complete tour of the plant is provided to familiarize the employee with the layout as well as to watch the production flow. During the tour, hazards of each position are explained. An employee is never allowed to do any job that they have not specifically trained for with the help of the JHA unique for that position. All employees are encouraged to be safety-minded, know what hazards are in the work environment and



Safety Representative, Philip Taylor, checks over the finished product.

Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) was conducted at each work position. Knowing the problems that are possible is the first step to winning the safety battle. The written JHAs are critical in prevention and training.

In general, change is often difficult for people and it was no different at TMI. Obtaining buy-in from the crew was a challenge. Every employee wanted to be safe and be able to go home at the end of the day with all body parts intact, but it was difficult for everyone to figure out how to accomplish this with the company’s past history of frequent injuries. People were resistant, fearful and hesitant at times, but the mill involved the crew members in the process and ultimately there was an acceptance at all levels as the changes took place and evolved.

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Tony Kaech, Day Shift Committee Chairman, was frustrated with non-cooperative truck drivers - so the team developed this idea!

what is expected from them in regards to safety. New employees are required to wear yellow hard hats to let other employees recognize that they are new to the job. This helps the more seasoned employees watch out for the new employees and help them to establish good safety consciousness. There are several safety objectives to meet before a new employee is allowed to wear the standard white hardhat.

TMI firmly believes that, “Complacency is the enemy of Safety!” To combat complacency, the company tries to find new ways to involve the crew. The Safety Committee rotates members on a yearly basis and ensures that experienced members train new members. The company schedules outside speakers to help in the training of the committee and the crew members in various areas of safety. Also, two committee members attend the Governor’s Council on Safety.

There is a continual process of training conducted: using videos, training by supervisors, committee members and the Safety Manager. Sometimes outside speakers, who have been injured on the job, are asked to speak about how their lives have been changed following the injury. This helps bring the message home and makes it more real to the employees.

Regular involvement of staff is essential to keeping safety in the front of everyone’s mind. TMI trains employees to get involved and not look the other way when it comes to safety, encouraging employees to coach each other and not hesitate to constructively advise one another if they observe an unsafe practice taking place. If a near miss is observed it is reported, so that future behavior can be changed. Employees also help update the JHAs.

TMI rewards a crew for their diligent effort if they make it one year without an accident. Accident-free crews are presented with jackets that have “One Year Accident Free” embroidered on the front. TMI has also developed banners and signs that remind workers and visitors that safety is important! In a little over three years, TMI has reduced accidents and injuries by 92%. That is well worth the effort!

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