

Innovative Safety & Health Leadership Award: Peer Review Check

Shawn Meier, the Safety Director for IAAP Member **Conmat, Inc.** instituted a concept and practice they call “Peer Review Check”. It was first approved by the company’s president **Eric Helm** and implemented at the beginning of the season in 2012. Conmat is based in Freeport, Illinois and operates limestone quarries in the Northwestern part of the state.

The goal of the Peer Review Check process is to bring miners together as a crew inspecting and checking operations prior to new start-up, resumption of operations, or after a major change, thus reducing the chance for errors. The concept is simple and Shawn credits the nuclear industry for developing the practice which he adapted to Conmat’s mining operations. Superintendent **Jeff Bussan** worked with Shawn to implement the process whereby they and all miners involved in the setup or change to the operation assemble for a Safety Planning Meeting and Pre-Start Peer Review including a walking visual inspection looking for hazards to persons, equipment, and production.



The first day it was implemented, miners as a group identified guarding and electrical issues that would have resulted in temporary shut down and repair, many of which could have also been classified as S&S Citations. Each miner has a different perspective and level of competency so checking the process as a group gets more eyes and knowledge on the process and more opportunity to detect and correct potential issues.

Comparing 2011 to 2012, Conmat reduced the number of S&S citations it received by over 25% while experiencing a 3 fold increase in the number of MSHA Inspections. Additionally, almost all citations received in 2012 were classified as “Low Negligence”. During 2012, a record year for tons produced by the company, no employees were injured.

Prior to the Peer Review Check program, the company’s safety culture was compliance driven with miners feeling individual, personal responsibility for citations and saying things like, “I don’t know what else I could have done to prevent that citation.” This culture was not serving the company or its miners well. With the Peer Review Check program, miners inspect together, repair together, and take ownership of the process as a team, rather than as individuals. The result has been a change to the company’s safety culture and the attitudes of the miners. Shawn says miners are now more proud of their operations and are happy working together as a crew to identify and correct safety hazards. He hears the word “We”, instead of “I”, when discussing safety issues with miners and during employee interviews conducted by MSHA inspectors. This program includes safety incentives for quarters worked without S&S citations, a recognition for each employee embracing the program, and an end of year luncheon for everyone to celebrate their accomplishments. Several MSHA inspectors have applauded the program during recent inspections.

The IAAP Safety Committee developed the “Innovative Safety & Health Leadership Award” to annually highlight practices by one member company, thereby providing others with an innovative example they may use at their own operations. Conmat received this award during the April 23, 2013 IAAP Convention for its Peer Review Check program — an example of safety & health leadership that engages employees with the understanding of what is needed to build and sustain an “injury free workplace” through their innovative and collective efforts. **Congratulations to Conmat, Inc. for winning this year’s Innovative Safety & Health Leadership Award.**