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A strict schedule of daily safety inspections has improved working conditions in the Division 10 maintenance shop. Pictured are, from left, Jeremy Schmidt, equipment maintenance supervisor, and Safety Captains John Rodriguez and David Klinkenborg.



Photo by Elizabeth Leider

Safety Captains Cut Hazards in Division 10 Maintenance Shop

- Daily inspections ensure employees work in a clean, safe area

By ELIZABETH LEIDER

(March 28, 2007) Since November of last year things have been different around the maintenance shop at Gateway Division 10. And that is exactly what the new 'Safety Captain' program was aiming to accomplish.

"There has been a Metro-wide push to increase the awareness of shop safety," explained Daniel Ramirez, an assistant maintenance manager. "What better way to do this than to have our own guys walk around the shop and identify safety issues on the floor?"

Here's How It Works

Each of the shifts has its own safety captain. "The safety captain comes in a half an hour before the end of the previous shift and inspects the condition of the shop using a shop inspection form," said Ramirez. "During the inspection, they identify any safety concerns, including the condition of the shop equipment and the overall cleanliness of the shop."

The safety captains then report any issues to the outgoing supervisor who makes sure everything is taken care of before the beginning of the next shift.

Because safety inspections are completed every eight hours, each shift has the benefit of working in a clean shop without having to avoid or to fix safety hazards.

Equipment problems found during safety inspections are referred to the sector Facilities Maintenance crew. Since the inception of the Safety Captain program, several pieces of dated equipment and tools have been replaced, including grinders, work benches, vices and ladders.

In addition to a primary safety captain, each shift also has an alternate safety captain. On the days when the primary captain doesn't work, the alternate captain takes over.

The three primary safety captains are David Klinkenborg, John Rodriguez and Bob Mitchell. Eddie Cardiel, Betty Williams and Rick Mason are the alternate captains.

Here's How It Helps

Safety Captain John Rodriguez paints a vivid picture. "Before the program began, the shop was pretty much a mess – trash on the floor, lots of hazards, tripping and falling hazards. Since the start of the program, I've seen an improvement in the shops as far as cleanliness and safety."

"We don't have nearly as much clutter as we did," agreed Safety Captain David Klinkenborg. "Now a lot of people will actually come up to us and let us know about problems they see that we might not catch."

Two areas in which Division 10 maintenance has seen definite improvement are in monthly facility safety audits and monthly environmental compliance reviews.

"Before the program, we had a long list of things we needed to correct and now we have maybe five or six things to address, and they're process-related instead of core safety issues," said Ramirez.

"At this point, I believe the employees here are beginning to take personal responsibility for safety in the shop," he added. "I'm confident we will change the safety culture here at Division 10 one employee at a time."