

## **People-Based Safety**

### ***Otis Stresses Peer Feedback in Working Safely***

Over the past decade, Otis has reduced its recordable and lost workday incident rates by 73 and 84 percent, respectively. Although these rates are among the lowest in the industry, Otis will not be satisfied until there are no serious incidents at its 2 million construction and service job sites.

In 2007, Otis began rolling out a voluntary people-based safety process that aims to improve workplace safety by getting employees to “actively care” about one another’s safety on the job. Employees are encouraged to pay even more attention to coworkers’ behavior to reinforce safe practices and to intervene and alert colleagues if they are putting themselves and others at risk. This approach ties directly to a formal observation and feedback process that is developed and coordinated by employees.

“We want employees to feel comfortable talking with their coworkers about safe and at-risk behaviors, not only during formal observations, but anytime they see it,” said Jay Small, Director, Otis EH&S programs.

The program was piloted in four North American locations: Chicago, Detroit, Winnipeg (Canada) and Hatfield, Pennsylvania. According to Detroit supervisor Brent Bauer, the program has been well-received because it shows participants how to offer criticism without being confrontational. “Most people don’t consciously decide to do something unsafe, so they are glad to be reminded in a constructive way,” he said.

Since the program began, more than 5,000 formal peer-to-peer checklist safety observations have been made. This checklist is a voluntary and anonymous initiative that encourages employees to observe how different tasks are being performed and whether or not good safety practices are being followed. One version of the checklist carries a “No Name, No Blame” headline to emphasize the anonymous nature of the effort, encouraging open and honest feedback. Plans call for follow-up studies of injuries and lost workday incident rates over the next few years to gauge the effectiveness of the process, and to make necessary adjustments.

According to Dave Knightly, Vice President of Worldwide Otis EH&S, people-based safety is most effective when adapted specifically to each location, not mandated as a “top-down, one-size-fits-all” initiative. He added that many past injuries could have been avoided if people felt more comfortable raising concerns. “We hope each location will take ownership in their own way, shaping the concept to fit their realities,” he said. “Our goal is for people-based safety to become part of our culture so that safe practices become automatic.”