

# Alfred McAlpine Street Lighting Operations

## Worker engagement case study 3

*This case study is part of a series of case studies, which give examples of best practice when engaging workers to improve health and safety in the workplace.*

### Introduction

This case study demonstrates the commitment required by managers to establish worker engagement with health and safety in a medium-sized business. Although it is still early days for this initiative, an update will be posted in due course to show how this investment in training and consultation pays off in the longer term.

### The challenge

The company's senior management recognised the need to implement a robust and effective mechanism for two-way communication, and at the same time build a culture of continuous improvement and awareness in health and safety. The company recognised that this sea change would require commitment, encouragement and empowerment instilled right from the top.

### Establishing a safety culture

The need for safety awareness, safe working and best practice is fundamentally recognised as being the directors' responsibility. However operational delivery and on-site safety requires two-way communication and a commitment to health and safety throughout the company. The management team at the main office in Chorley has taken the first steps in establishing a safety culture, in partnership with the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT). The aim is to encourage all company employees to be proactive in getting involved in health and safety, to provide feedback to managers on what works well and what does not, and to put forward initiatives to improve everybody's working conditions on site.

### Investing in training

The company recognised that to achieve this change and make it 'behavioural', the working patterns of managers and operatives would have to be transformed. The company brought in UCATT and consultants M A H Safety and

### Company fact file

Alfred McAlpine's street lighting team is part of its Infrastructure Services business. The company has a significant track record in the industry for providing a one-stop service for the installation, renewal and maintenance of street lighting, amenity lighting, and other electrical installations.

The team operates from Chorley in Lancashire with a satellite site near Mansfield. A skilled team of operators use a wide range of specialised vehicles and equipment. They have completed many successful contracts with the Highways Agency, local authorities and private sector clients.

The company typically employs around 50 people at a number of sites throughout the UK. The range of services offered includes:

- street lighting;
- motorway lighting;
- illuminated traffic signs;
- amenity lighting;
- non-illuminated traffic signs;
- associated ducting and chamber installations; and
- communications installations.

These are often high-risk activities conducted on 'live' high-speed carriageways while other construction activities are taking place on the same stretch of highway. Work is often carried out at night. As well as the obvious risks of gaining access at height, there are risks from fast-moving traffic and the need to protect pedestrians and other road users.

Environmental Services to help bring about this change, and set up a small network of safety ambassadors (trained representatives from the workforce).

To begin the process, awareness presentations based on specific safety topics were delivered to the workforce. Appropriate candidates were then chosen by employees to represent them at the Works Council meetings. These representatives were further trained to IOSH certification level.

This training is being followed up by further training for the whole workforce, to increase knowledge and raise awareness of safety on site.



Figure 1 John Roe, site supervisor for Alfred McAlpine Infrastructure Services



Figure 2 A Works Council meeting

### The Works Council - a mechanism for consultation

The company has established a Works Council, an effective means of consultation with employees where all the members, including the safety ambassadors, managers, unions and employees' representatives, will decide on the constitution and agenda items.

'From the safety representatives' viewpoint, and therefore the viewpoint of the workforce, the Works Council meetings will provide a very important assembly at which particular areas of health and safety can be highlighted to management. Without this forum many areas could well be overlooked which could become a real problem in the long term. At the same time, communicating health and safety to the workforce will become an easier process, and what's a boring subject to some of us can become a more interesting area of our everyday working lives. This in turn will lead to a safer working environment for all of us, which is our key aim, and will contribute to the future development of Alfred McAlpine street lighting's operation and long-term employment security.'

*John Roe, site supervisor for Alfred McAlpine Infrastructure Services*

### The business benefits

Managers believe that there are a number of business benefits to this initiative:

- a safer working environment;
- long-term employment security;
- opportunities for workers to highlight health and safety issues to management, with the confidence that they will be acted upon;
- the safety culture will differentiate Alfred McAlpine within its market place;
- the current good safety record will be further enhanced by this positive transformation of health and safety culture, and will contribute to future success of the company.

'Any employer wishing to improve health and safety practices other than simply regulatory compliance must engage their workforce in meaningful consultation. This requires planning, determination and training for everyone involved.

Alfred McAlpine have embraced this view wholeheartedly and are certain to reap rewards for their labours'.

*Billy Baldwin, UCATT North West Regional Safety Adviser*