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Consistent safety awareness helps McBee achieve three million hours without a lost-time accident

McBee, S.C. (June 25, 2009) – Keeping safety in the forefront and on everyone's mind at all times was the strategy that helped the employees at the A. O. Smith Water Products Company McBee plant attain a record three million hours without a lost-time accident.

McBee began its streak on Sept. 24, 2005, and surpassed the three-million-hour mark on Feb. 20. Achieving three million hours without a lost-time accident represents a record for the plant. Just three other facilities have surpassed the three million hours milestone in the more than 50 years A. O. Smith has kept records.

The 800,000 square foot facility manufactures commercial water heaters and boilers and employs approximately 450 people

Today at a special ceremony, Mark Petrarca, A. O. Smith Corporation senior vice president human resources and public affairs, presented the McBee employees with a commemorative plaque along with a signed letter from Paul Jones, chairman and chief executive officer of A. O. Smith, congratulating them for their achievement.

"Your facility has now gone more than three and one-half years without a lost-time accident, and you should be proud of this safety achievement," commented Petrarca in his address to employees. "This record reflects the importance you place on working safely at all times."

"The focus at the McBee plant is to maintain a consistent and facility-wide safety program," commented Tim Wallace, McBee safety supervisor. "Every day the safety team's emphasis is on being watchful of safety hazards, making corrections that are needed, and maintaining safety consciousness among the employees." In addition, the team incorporates facility wide checks for hazards, fork truck inspections and PPE (personal protective equipment) inspections into their semi-monthly safety meetings.

"Safety is a 'team event' in McBee," said Chris Count, McBee human resource manager. Over the past few years, the safety team has expanded employee involvement in the safety programs throughout the plant. "Workplace safety is a focal point in employee meetings, training sessions and everyday work activities," added Count. McBee holds monthly facility-wide training sessions regarding a variety of safety topics for its employees. "We try to do things a little differently in order to make our meetings interesting, memorable and applicable to daily safety issues," said Wallace.

At the March training meeting, volunteers were asked to tie their shoe using only one hand to illustrate how much their life would change if they had a bad injury to their hand or arm. In April, the plant promoted safe fork truck driving with a lunch-hour fork truck rodeo. Employees volunteered to drive safely through the fork-truck driving course.

"The committee works hard to be creative in its efforts to keep safety as a focus of the daily work environment," said Wallace. One month this year committee members gave everyone a Zero ® candy bar to thank employees for working safely and achieving zero accidents. The committee has also handed out meal tickets to employees for working safely. "We want to reinforce positive actions with our employees," remarked Wallace.

Actions at the McBee plant demonstrate that record-setting performance is not the only focus of their safety program. The plant's 2009 Safety Program theme of "Working Safely to Spend More Time with Our Families and Friends," indicates employees are aware that maintaining a safe work environment is also important to their spouses, children and friends. Displayed at the front entrance of the facility is a poster of the kids and grandkids of some of the employees with a caption that reads, "These are just a few more reasons to work safe today."

"Everyone is doing a super job," said Wallace. "Employees realize that it is everyone's responsibility to work safely. They are proud of their safety record and the improvement that has been made by the focus on safety."

About A. O. Smith

A. O. Smith Corporation, with 2008 sales of \$2.3 billion, is a global leader applying innovative technology and energy-efficient solutions to products marketed worldwide. The company is one of the world's leading manufacturers of residential and commercial water heating equipment, offering a comprehensive product line featuring the best-known brands in North America and China. A. O. Smith is also one of the largest manufacturers of electric motors for residential and commercial applications in North America.