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NEWS

Historic milestone: BNI marks 1,000 days without an on-the-job injury

Center, North Dakota—One thousand days equals 24,000 hours or 1,440,000 minutes. As of April 10, that's how long BNI Coal has gone without an on-the-job injury that resulted in an employee missing time from work.

It's believed to be the first time in BNI's 90-year history that the company has achieved the 1,000-day milestone and reflects the hard work and renewed commitment to safety following an accident in November 2013 that resulted in an employee losing a leg.

"This tremendous accomplishment reflects how employees strengthened their commitment to a Zero Injury safety culture," said Wade Boeshans, president and general manager of BNI Energy. "We came together five years ago on the heels of John's (Renaud) serious injuries, formed what we called the Safety Culture Team, and recommitted to Zero Injury."

After Renaud's accident, all employees participated in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis regarding safety. That led to the formation of the Safety Culture Team that identified safety initiatives focused on training, hazard recognition, communications and accountability.

"This was a significant inflection point in the safety culture at BNI in which all employees demanded complete commitment, engagement and accountability for safety from themselves, their co-workers and the organization," Boeshans said. "While I am pleased with the 1,000-day accomplishment as it reflects all the hard work we did, I am most proud of the team for changing the safety culture. Nearly half of BNI employees joined the organization in the last five years and were not part of the safety analysis or the Safety Culture Team, and yet the safety culture has transcended workforce transition. I couldn't be prouder of our team and our organization for the courage and the commitment to change culture."

BNI celebrated its achievement on April 11 with breakfast for first-shift employees and lunch for second-shift workers.

"This milestone is a true testament of our employees continued focus on not 'just having to be safe' but 'wanting to be safe,'" said Jay Volk, health, safety and environmental services manager. "It is a huge part of what makes BNI successful."

Mike Heger, operations manager, agreed.

"One thousand days without an LTA (lost time accident) is a very impressive accomplishment for an operation of our size," Heger said. "This achievement is the direct result of a tremendously improved safety culture at BNI, coupled with a few modest improvements to our equipment and processes. I see this as a strong signal that our ultimate goal of Zero Injury is attainable and well within reach. Congratulations to the entire organization."

BNI Coal is a subsidiary of ALLETE, which is headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota.