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Contractor Recognized for Record Setting Site Safety Milestone

By Mohammed Aliwi and James Bullinger

AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Gulf Region South (GRS) recognized the extraordinary of a contractor and its employees Nov. 18 for achieving 4.5 million man-hours without a recordable lost work-day accident.



Col. Gary Johnston, right, presented a Commander's Safety Recognition Award Nov. 18 to **Ricky Moore, left, and Gerald W. J. Shaw**, both of Fluor-AMEC Joint Venture, for the company's safety achievement of 4.5 million man-hours without a recordable lost work-day accident at the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant, Iraq. [ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER]

certifications to its workforce.

Daniel Fujimoto, Gulf Region Division's chief of Safety and Occupational Health for the Gulf Region Division, said that Fluor-AMEC's record is an

Fluor-AMEC Joint Venture corp., the primary contractor responsible for the design and construction of the massive water treatment plant located north of An Nasiriyah, was recognized for its success in accident prevention from Aug. 1, the start of the project, to Oct. 8, 2006.

GRS oversees the contract, which will provide safe water to about 500,000 people in Dhi-Qar province.

During those 793 days, the contractor employed more than 750 workers a day, with a peak of up to 1,419 people without a recordable lost work-day accident.

The work in this 26-month period included construction of five skimmer tanks, a water treatment facility, five elevated storage tanks, three pump stations, and over 100 kilometers of transmission pipelines with five river crossings.

The project required the placement of 1.5 million cubic meters of concrete up to heights of 100 meters. Col. Gary Johnston, GRS commander, presented the Commander's Safety Recognition Award to AMEC's Ricky Moore, the task order manager, and Gerald W. J. Shaw, the safety advisor and

safety manager at the water treatment plant. The company also recognized the effort of its workforce by presenting plaques to its subcontractors:

outstanding achievement.

"Not too many contractors in the states can claim this level of excellence. This is truly a success story on what can happen when we (USACE) and the contractor partner together for safety," he said.

This award refers to the company's accountability; with recognition of many individuals who have done their best to provide guidance and advice.

According to Fujimoto, the idea of the recognition award was started by June Morales, a former GRS project engineer, who wanted to recognize Fluor-AMEC for their safety.

"GRD supported his idea and provided the guidance and direction to GRS on how to generate the safety recognition certificate. Ms. Margaret Williams was the acting GRS safety manager who completed the task," Fujimoto said.

For Williams, a project engineer, it is Fluor-AMEC's approach and commitment to safety that made the difference.

"(The company's) safety engineers do an excellent job. They walk around the construction sites with the on-site engineer and point out items of concerns. Many times they have the violations corrected immediately," she said.

Williams believes that safety in Iraq is improving and safety violations and hazards are minimized.

"By continuing to educate the Iraqi contractors on the importance of safe work practices, it minimizes accidents on our construction. By doing so, it also makes the contractors more efficient and more productive," she added.

Shaw said construction safety is different from in the U.S.

"This varies tremendously at the different ends of the scale. There are Iraqi laborers who apply all they are taught for their own safety and the safety of others around them. They wear and take care of their personal protective equipment. They work safely and carefully keeping their work area clean and tidy.

"Then there is the challenge with the higher educated and more qualified Iraqi line management, who sometimes have difficulty accepting their responsibility to implement safety and to care for the workers under their control," he said.

Shaw also mentioned he's been challenged with maintaining the company's record.

"Mentally, it has been very hard to continuously work at being proactive, while not being distracted by the symptoms creating negativity," he said. "Initially, there was a very hard set of attitudes to overcome and still that journey goes on."

Shaw explained a change in roles can change a person's focus and make a difference in responsibility and performance.

"The Iraqi safety engineers have had their role changed from safety officers to safety managers. This has been a huge step for them and has seen their effectiveness levels increase with proven results," he said.

"Getting workers to comply is a challenge. 'Leading' workers is the solution applied. Our success is humbling because we are not perfect and we go on with all the compassion and determination we can maintain.

"At all times it has been essential to use approved standards. Here in Iraq our company group safety management systems are developed from the Army Corps of Engineers Safety and Health Requirements Manual," Shaw said.

Fluro-AMEC's safety program theme is simple and easily understood by the workforce – "Nobody Get Hurt."

According to Shaw, Fluor-AMEC uses a variety of methods to impart safety, including 'training the trainer' classes; using on-site interpreters; pre-work safety meetings; and on-site demonstrations and examples.



Fluor-AMEC Joint Venture also presented safety recognition plaque to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees who contributed to the working environment that helped Fluor-AMEC achieve 4.5 million hours accident free. Here Ricky Moore, left, and Gerald Shaw, right, congratulates James R. Long and Margaret Williams, the project engineer and the acting safety officer who oversee the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant construction efforts. [ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLING]



Gerald Shaw, the safety advisor and project safety manager, checks his radio after inspecting one of the skimmer tanks at the water treatment plant near Nasiriyah, Iraq. [ARMY PHOTO BY J. R. Long]

Shaw is quick to point out it is a team e



A heavy equipment operator uses a safety observer, in background, to provide warnings and watch for other workers while compacting the soil between skimmer tanks during construction at the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant. [ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER]

contributed to the company's safety record. "Here in Iraq it is my company, through corporate Safety Department for Systems safety engineers and helpers, the company management team, and the GRS construction representatives as part of the combined team," said. "And it is also the subcontractors' teams and their workforce, for without them we achieve nothing."

Safety applications in Iraq and the U.S. are essentially the same, Shaw said.

"We are applying the same standards. Full compliance is our goal. It's why we continuously apply ourselves to build on our achievements," he said. "In that we are not, it does test our experience and initiative to use the resources we have here, in people skills, equipment, to do the work safely."

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