

Media Release

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Top Energy takes out national workplace safety award

Top Energy was awarded the EEA Workplace Safety Award by Acting Energy Minister Hekia Parata in front of around 700 members of the New Zealand electricity industry at the EEA annual conference in Auckland on Thursday.

The Far North electricity lines company beat six other entrants to take out the industry's top award for safety, in recognition of their new safety-focused culture and significant reduction of lost time injuries (LTIs) from an historical high of 16 LTIs in 2004 to just one in the last twelve months. This change has seen Top Energy move from being one of the worst performers in the industry to one of the best.

Chief Executive Russell Shaw accepted the award, saying it was a great privilege to be working in such a safety-focused organisation and that it had been a company-wide effort to develop this way of working.

"It was unacceptable that workplace incidents were considered part of doing business on our electricity network," says Shaw. "People had gotten used to making do with what they had and had stopped asking for what they needed to do their jobs safely and effectively."

Top Energy Faultman Monty Walker also took the stage to deliver the acceptance speech on behalf of the company, saying that Top Energy has become a safety-conscious company.

"In the last two years there has been a visible difference in the company and in the way people approach safety on the job," says Walker. "Safety is our number one objective and employees now have the right training and equipment to do their jobs safely."

Top Energy identified the need for change through a companywide review in 2009. They visited other companies in the electricity sector and two outside of industry, New Plymouth-based Methanex and Fitzroy Engineering, to identify best-practice safety processes that could be applied at Top Energy.

At the same time, new forms of internal communication and recognition for accurate reporting of safety incidents were established to identify opportunities for improvement and celebrate achievement.

Up-to-date workplace safety training, personal protection equipment (PPE) and improved vehicles were introduced so employees could do their jobs safely. Health and safety practices were improved and formalised, earning the company Tertiary level ACC Workplace Safety Accreditation, the highest level available.

This is the second time Top Energy has won at the annual EEA Conference, taking out the Public Safety Award in 2010 for their Close Approach Consent Process.

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