

Racer becomes a parts fabricator

Mazworx, Orlando, Fla., finds that success on the track fuels business at the shop



the fabricator

May 2008

The foremost authority on metal fabricating technology

www.thefabricator.com



The official publication of the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, Intl.

Boosting resistance welding efficiency

New advancements in nesting software

Fabricator succeeds in heavy-equipment market

How to evaluate a CAM system



Michael Bishop, assistant editor of *The FABRICATOR*, can be reached at michaelb@thefabricator.com.

The streak

Kentucky shop keeps safety record perfect for more than three years

Few things can thrill and unite sports fans as much as a great streak by a favorite team or athlete. Historically, there are plenty to mention: Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak in 1941; Brett Favre's 275 consecutive games played (including playoffs) from 1992 to 2008; the Los Angeles Lakers' 33 straight wins during the 1971-72 season; the Boston Bruins' 29 straight playoff appearances between 1968 and 1996; and Joe Louis' 25 consecutive heavyweight title defenses during his reign from 1937 to 1949. Every time one of these feats occurs, it's known simply as *The Streak*.

Notable streaks aren't limited to sports, either. In Kentucky, a structural steel fabrication shop has been on quite a streak of its own, one that it adds to every day. J.R. Hoe & Sons, Middlesboro, Ky., has operated for the past three years and nine months without a lost-time accident. That's 1,369 consecutive days—more than 360,000 working hours—without a setback, as of April 23. The company's streak officially began July 28, 2004.

J.R. Hoe & Sons manufactures industrial castings and construction fabrications, such as columns, beams, trusses, equipment supports, stairs, and railings. It also has machining and engineering operations.

The company was founded in 1909, and although it has a lengthy manufacturing history, its safety history isn't as prestigious. J.R. Hoe President Harry H. "Bo" Hoe said that before the late 1990s, the company had never involved its workers in its safety program. At that time the company decided it needed to turn around its safety record, starting with the formation of a safety committee.

"A lot of accidents years ago showed us we had to do something," said Larry Thacker, J.R. Hoe safety coordinator. "The safety committee was the main thing that got everything rolling as far as starting to cut down on the number of accidents."

Since forming the committee, J.R. Hoe has improved its safety record significantly. The company had a two-year period of perfect safety before its current three-year, nine-month streak. The committee has made safety a point of emphasis for the business, which believes good practices in its safety program relate directly to good practices in its operations.

According to Hoe, the streak is notable because the company works with molten iron at temperatures up to 2,800 degrees F in its foundry and performs heavy steel fabrications in its structural shop. The company estimates that between August 2004 and August 2007 it produced or distributed more than 15,000 tons of iron and steel—more than 30 million lbs. of material.

"We're very proud of the record—it reflects on the type of employee who works here," Hoe said. "And we feel that our excellence in safety goes hand in hand with the quality of work that we produce."

Thacker oversees all safety regulations and training for the company. The six-member safety committee does monthly walkthrough inspections of the plant and discusses improvements that need to be made to the facility or operations. Each shop—the foundry, steel shop, and machine shop—has a committee member assigned to it. The member looks for any issue that might compromise worker safety and brings the issue to the next committee meeting, where the group decides on a correction.



▲ J.R. Hoe & Sons' safety committee. From left: Devan Evans; Cliff Slaven; Mike Carton; Larry Thacker, safety coordinator; and Jack Robertson. Not pictured: Susie Parker.

J.R. Hoe conducts annual training with its employees on all industry-related OSHA programs, teaching workers procedures that include proper lifting techniques and forklift safety. The company also provides its employees with periodic group incentive safety bonuses; it awarded the most recent bonus when the streak hit three and a half years. It presents the award exclusively as a group prize, rather than an individual one, because the committee believes a group bonus encourages workers to look out for each other.

"[The safety program] is received well overall," Hoe said. Our employees realize that's part of the job here—it's the first thing they're trained on when they start. It's accepted here by all and respected by all."

The streak hasn't gone unnoticed. Last year the company received the Governor's Safety and Health award, which is presented to companies that have worked a certain number of hours without a safety or health setback, as well as the Thoroughbred award, which distinguishes the health and safety records of companies with 50 and fewer employees that have operated for at least two consecutive years without a lost-time incident, according to the *Middlesboro Daily News*. The company was recognized in early May by Governor Steven L. Beshear at Kentucky's 24th annual Governor's Safety and Health Conference and Exhibition.

"I think [the streak] shows the quality of our people, that they're concerned about the safety of themselves and their co-workers," Assistant Safety Director Susie Parker said.

With its streak at three years and nine months and its committee continuing to look for ways to improve safety, what is the next goal for J.R. Hoe & Sons? Hoe said a wellness program is a natural next step because it would combine the plant's safety standards with personal health initiatives. So far, though, the company is only discussing adding a wellness program—ideally while adding another day to the streak.

Let us know if you are doing some interesting fabricating or doing something noteworthy in your shop.

Michael Bishop

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 12345678 (41467014)
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
PITNEY BOWES INTL MAIL SVCS
STATION A, PO BOX 54
WINDSOR ON N9A 6J5
EMAIL: RETURNSIL@IMEX.PB.COM

The FABRICATOR® (ISSN 0888-0301) is published 12 times yearly by FMA Communications Inc., 833 Featherstone Rd., Rockford, Illinois 61107-6302. The FABRICATOR is circulated free upon request to those who qualify and who are involved in metal fabricating; subscription to all others is \$75.00 per year. International subscription is \$140.00 per year. Periodical postage paid at Rockford, Illinois, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address change to The FABRICATOR, 833 Featherstone Road, Rockford, Illinois 61107-6302. Printed in the U.S.A. Copyright 2008 by FMA Communications Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher is prohibited.

The FABRICATOR® | An FMA Publication
www.thefabricator.com | May 2008