

News release - March 31, 2011

Thames Water creates a new platform for Health and Safety

A raft designed to float on raw sewage was one of the winning entries at the UK water sector's first-ever health and safety awards, staged in London today by the country's biggest water and sewerage company.

ERIKS Industrial Services made the floating work platform to improve safety for engineers cleaning out sewage settlement tanks at sewage works.

Until now they have had to drain down the tanks and set up scaffolds to carry out routine cleaning and maintenance.

The new floating platforms bring two benefits: Firstly, workers no longer have to run the risk of working at height in a drained-down tank. Secondly, the tanks no longer have to be fully emptied while being cleaned, which meaning less disruption to the sewage works' operation.

ERIKS's platform, together with a hand-railed ladder that fastens to the side of sewage tanks, won the 'innovation' category at Thames Water's Excellence in Health and Safety Awards 2011.

"The beauty of this idea is it's the simplicity and effectiveness with which it tackles one of the biggest operational hazards we face," **said Martin Baggs, Thames Water's chief executive, who sat on the judging panel.**

The competition was run for Thames Water's contractors, which are carrying out nearly £5bn of essential work to improve and maintain its water pipes, sewers and other facilities across London and the Thames Valley between 2010 and 2015.

Mr Baggs added: "We don't run annual awards for hitting financial goals or for meeting regulatory targets for water and wastewater.

"So why for health and safety? The answer is simple: health and safety matters more than anything else. It must be embedded in everything we do."

There were seven categories in all, including: best collaboration, young person of the year, best performance and biggest improvement.

Also on the judging panel were: Lesley Calladine, HSE director for Crossrail, occupational health and safety law specialist Professor Frank Wright, and Nick Edwards, editor of Construction News.

Tamesis, a joint venture including Laing O'Rourke and Imtech Process, won the best performance category.

During 400,000 man hours in 12 months at Britain's two biggest sewage works, Beckton and Crossness in east London, each undergoing major expansions, there were no HSE (Health and Safety Executive)-reportable incidents.

Tamesis's safety system at Crossness and Beckton included using the "IIF (incident and injury free)" behavioural safety programme and encouraging staff to seek advice.

Ends

Notes to editors:

For more information call the Thames Water press office on 0118 373 8924.

There were 57 entries to the seven categories at Thames Water's Excellence in Health and Safety Awards 2011, from which seven winners, listed below with the runners-up, were chosen:

1. Health and safety performance - finalists

Runner-up – Black and Veatch

Black and Veatch runs Thames Valley operations for Thames Water. Its new BOSS (behaviour on safe sites) system led to RIDDOR-reportable incidents falling from eight in 2009 to just one in 2010. Meanwhile near-miss reports rose from 100 to 349.

Winner - Tamesis

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Runner-up – GBJV (Galliford Try Biwater JV)

In seven months and nearly 75,000 man hours at Long Reach sewage works in Dartford, GBJV had no on-site accidents or injuries. This was achieved by engaging all staff in a health and safety culture and repeating this mantra: "Only the best is good enough."

2. Health and safety initiative - finalists

Runner-up – GBM

In a bid to combat 'white finger', a common ailment for construction workers, GBM fitted its plant equipment with hi-tech hand-arm vibration (HAV) meters, which flash different colours to indicate when an individual is approaching, or at, his or her exposure limit. This has increased productivity by 15 per cent.

Runner-up – MVB JV

MVB, currently building the £635m Lee Tunnel, began running health check-ups and training classes from its Safety Bus in an effort to ensure all employees were fit and healthy. A different issue was focussed on each month, eg, stress in May, sun care in April, and so on.

Winner - Black and Veatch

Black and Veatch ran a safety course for staff working on the major expansion at Mogden sewage works. The course aimed specifically to avoid accidentally hitting underground power cables, which can cause serious injuries and customer widespread disruption. In 125,000 man hours since January 2010 there were no service strikes or near misses.

Innovation in health and safety – finalists

Runner-up – MVB

Cleaning off cement residue by hand from a mixer chute doesn't do your skin much good. But without a piece of kit to do it, this skin-damaging practice was commonplace at MVB sites – until they came up with their cement-removal gadget.

Runner-up – Optimise

Cable-avoidance tools (CATs) can save potentially life-threatening injuries, customer disruption and financial cost – but not if they're held at the wrong angle. Optimise developed a gizmo to attach to CATs to ensure operatives use them correctly.

Winner - ERIKS Industrial Services

To avoid falls from height while cleaning or maintaining tanks at sewage works, ERIKS created a steel, hand-railed ladder that fixes to the side of a tank. It also made a floating work platform, avoiding the need both to work at height and to fully drain down tanks.

3. Best practice in health and safety collaboration - finalists

Winner - Interserve

Interserve put all its staff, sub-contractors stakeholders through site safety inductions focusing specifically on hazard-spotting at Riverside sewage works in Kent, which is currently undergoing major upgrades. They achieved 200,000 man hours without a reportable accident and, by involving the Environment Agency, avoided the need to install 80 metres of unsightly sheet piling to stabilise ground at the site.

Runner-up - GBM JV

GBM's 'Openspace' meetings on all aspects of site health and safety were unique in their ability to bring together the main decision-makers - agents, suppliers and works managers - for frank and productive exchanges of views.

Runner-up - MVB JV

The stand-out detail of MVB's approach to ensuring safe working practices at the £635m Lee Tunnel construction site in east London was simple - organisation. As a result, all members of the joint venture know who's doing what and when – basic stuff but vital to safe practice on this huge, busy site.

4. Best health and safety improvement – finalists

Winner - Optimise

You can be really badly hurt if you hit a power cable when digging down to fix a broken water main. By scrutinising all the latest data and bringing the issue to the fore at all team talks, Optimise reduced by two thirds accidental damage to underground electricity, gas and telecoms assets.

Runner-up - J Brown

By introducing an eight-point safety improvement plan together with regular site safety meetings, J Brown reduced its reportable accident frequency rate from 0.9 per 100,000 man hours in April 2010 to 0.4 in December.

Runner-up - Mouchel

There were 12 accidents last December involving Mouchel's customer-side leakage workers. Following a campaign to improve safety practices, near-miss reports increased significantly and in February 2011 there were just two accidents.

5. Young person of the year**Winner - Daryl Cook – Barhale Construction**

Despite his relative youth, Barhale has entrusted Daryl with a lot of safety responsibility. On paper, you might question that decision - but not when you see Daryl in action. He is passionate and approachable as a health and safety champion, displaying the leadership and day-to-day management that get others engaged.

Runner-up - Jamie Bradley – MVB JV

At the tender age of 20, Jamie demonstrates a tangible passion for safe working practices. A good thing, too, when one considers he is working on the Lee Tunnel construction scheme, the biggest engineering project by the UK water industry since privatisation in 1989.

Runner-up - Oisin Gibson - J Murphy & Son Ltd

Most young men of 25 are dreaming up ways to put themselves in as much danger as possible. Not Oisin, who has instead shows maturity beyond his years to drive through innovative and effective safety practices at Deephams sewage works.

6. Outstanding contribution by an individual – finalists**Winner - Ian Noble, contract director for Optimise**

The idea for Thames Water's AMP5 online safety hub came out of the company's health and safety conference last year. But without someone to drive it forward, the safety hub would have remained just that – an idea. Ian's passion and enthusiasm made the hub a reality.

Winner - Maslah Abdirahman, Black and Veatch

Maslah is the gate man at Mogden sewage works. It's a tough job, which involves directing traffic and pedestrians across the road that crosses the site's entrance. Despite often getting abuse hurled in his direction, Maslah is well-known in the area for always being courteous and polite, and never giving less than 100%.

7. Outstanding contribution by an individual**Winner – Ian Noble**

The judges said: "Although there was general agreement between contractors that this was a good idea, Optimise, namely Ian, took ownership. Ian chaired every meeting and motivated others to get involved. He did this on top of his existing day job."

Winner - Maslah Abdirahman

The judges said: "Maslah is does this job much better job than most people in the same role. That's because he chooses to do it well. He is working on his own for the majority of the time and motivates himself to do the best he can do."

Information on Thames Water

Thames Water, which serves London and the Thames Valley, is Britain's biggest water and sewerage company.

Top-quality drinking water: We supply more than a tonne a week of water on average to each of our 8.7m of our drinking water customers. That's 2,600m litres a day.

Recycling water back to the environment: We also recycle safely back to the environment 13.8m people's wastewater. That's 2,800m litres of sewage a day – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our region: Our service area stretches from eastern fringes of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in the west, through to the western edges of Essex and Kent in the east.

Bills: Our bills are among the lowest in the UK water sector, with the average household bill currently 83p a day per household for water and sewerage services.

Ownership: Thames Water Utilities Ltd is owned by a group of pension and infrastructure funds from around the world, including Macquarie-managed funds, which have a 49% stake.

Regulators: All water firms in England and Wales are privately-owned and answerable to our regulators, who monitor all our activities.

- *Ofwat* is the economic regulator for the water industry: www.ofwat.gov.uk/

- The *Environment Agency* is the environmental regulator: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/

- The *Drinking Water Inspectorate* regulates the quality of water companies supply: www.dwi.gov.uk/

Renewable energy: As well as providing water and sewerage services, we are also the biggest non-commercial producer of electricity inside the M25. We burn methane derived from sewage to create heat from which we generate our own renewable electricity to help power our works. This saves us on average £15m a year in grid energy bills.