

IT'S **SAFETY FIRST** AT BORGER GROUP OF COMPANIES

By Kelcey Blazina

The Borger family has been in the construction business for the past 99 years and is now a fourth-generation business focusing on heavy civil construction. If asked, Bill Borger, the current CEO of Borger Group of Companies, will tell you they do “Deepes and Dirt.” Deepes are the installation of deep utilities such as sanitary, storm and water lines, and Dirt is earth moving. These two areas of heavy civil construction form the core of the operation. Clients of Borger include anyone who is in need of such services, from land developers that are building subdivisions for single-family homes to municipalities replacing aging infrastructure. Borger’s growing transport division takes pride in its collection of 76-wheel transport trucks and trailers specializing in heavy haul.

Although just a medium-sized business, this Calgary-based company contends well above its weight class in the world of safety. In 2013, inspired by its world-class and innovative safety program, Borger was recognized as one of the top-two safest “Building and Construction” companies in all of Canada by Canadian Occupational Safety (COS)/Thompson Reuters. In 2014, Borger stepped it up another notch and was recognized by COS as the first place (Gold) winner as the safest Building and

Construction company in all of Canada. Again, after proudly receiving second in Canada in both 2015 and 2016, Borger not only found the top of the podium and Gold in 2017 as Canada’s Safest Employer in Building and Construction but also placed first for Canada’s Best Health & Safety Culture; a nationwide competition including all the different industries and the most prestigious safety award in Canada.

“We are exceptionally humbled to win this award,” says Bill Borger. “It is recognition we are so proud to display on every one of our trucks.” The award itself is a very intensive process that begins with a detailed nomination application and continues with Canadian Occupational Safety administering an Employee Perception Survey from a significant portion of each applicant’s workforce. Based on these two pre-qualifications, potential winners are shortlisted. COS then sends an independent auditor to the short-listed organizations to verify their safety claims, best practices and culture. The results are tallied and examined by a panel of independent judges. The 2018 winners will be announced in October and Borger is hopeful to once again be included among the safest companies in Canada.



Photo courtesy of Riverwood Photography



So, how do they do it? “Well,” says Borger, “we are keenly aware that the work we do is fraught with risks including team members on the ground in close proximity to massive equipment, steep ditches that tower up to 16 metres above those installing pipe, working around existing utilities such as gas and electric lines, accommodating vehicle traffic, and working in inclement weather; these are just a few of the risks encountered. Every day has potential for serious injury and for every team member to go home safe at the end of the day, strong policies, procedures and best practices are required, along with an outstanding safety culture that keeps safety at the forefront of everyone’s minds. We believe the best way to achieve this is to make safety fun, engaging and rewarding with a strong emphasis on the highest level of safety education.”

A fundamental part of safety at Borger is its training programs both on the job and in learning settings, most significantly through online Borger U programs. The online portion of Borger U was created internally with course content on every aspect of Borger operations. Team members complete these courses

for compensation, credits and certification. In fact, every type of equipment has its own course and exam that must be completed with a passing grade prior to the field proficiency test and the end goal of attaining an operator licence for that specific piece of equipment. A recent addition to the greater

than 75 – unique to Borger – online education courses (complete with exams) is Cannabis Awareness in the Workplace. This training, as a response to new legislation and regulatory challenges for the industry, educates all Borger team members on the guidelines around cannabis in the workplace and re-familiarizes them with the company’s drug and alcohol policy. Videos and course content on identification signs of impairment reiterate that being under the influence of substances that impair judgment and the ability to work safely while at work, regardless of medical prescriptions, is not permitted. The course also reminds team members of their right to

refuse work if they suspect another team member is under the influence, by presenting their Speak Out for Safety (S.O.S.) card to the supervisor to shut down the site, or team members can self-declare their impairment and leave the job site without professional consequences.

AN S.O.S. CARD ENTITLES AN INDIVIDUAL TO SHUT DOWN ANY JOB SITE AT ANY TIME IN THE NAME OF SAFETY, WITH COMPLETE IMMUNITY, BY HANDING THE CARD TO A SITE LEADER



SINCE 2013, BORGER HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF CANADA'S BEST MANAGED COMPANIES AND IS CURRENTLY **A GOLD STANDARD WINNER** FOR THIS AWARD.



Borger U is available through the Borger App and downloadable from either the Apple or Google Play stores, making it available to all team members on their phones. This same app has the ability to simultaneously roll out education courses to team members with automatic prompts for uncompleted courses or exams and then delivers certificates, credits and compensation at course completion. Through the Borger App, team members can track their Borger Bucks and education credits, access maps to job sites, receive live updates on daily site conditions and listen to the weekly broadcast. The weekly Borger Broadcast, available companywide on the Borger App and recorded by Bill Borger, identifies the multiple weekly winning crews or divisions in safety and shares trends and concerns. "We are definitely goofy and silly in our broadcast, all part of making it fun to work at Borger, while still ensuring the safety messages are not lost," expresses Terry Apuzza, Field Operations Manager and regular co-host on the Borger Broadcast.

WikiBORGER, also available through the Borger App, is built on the Wikipedia platform and houses all things Borger. Every safety policy, procedure and best practice is at each team member's fingertips in the easily searchable wiki format. No longer do team members refer to binders of policies and procedures but rather in real time on wikiBORGER.

Borger has a creative safety program with many of its innovative team-generated safety practices finding their grand reveal at Borger's internal annual Innovation Fair. At the most recent fair, a team member unveiled a new concrete pipe-lifting device

that does not require team members to get on top of the pipe for rigging and lifting thus mitigating considerable risk, especially in winter conditions. This new pipe rigger recently received an engineering stamp of approval and is now in use. Over the years, the annual Innovation Fair has been responsible for dozens of other outstanding team-generated safety ideas that now form a significant part of Borger's safety best practices including Borger Nexus, A.W.A.R.E. and Live Safe to name a few.

A significant safety innovation is the Speak Out for Safety (S.O.S.) card. The S.O.S. card is carried on each team member's person from their first day of employment, along with their Borger ID and operator licence, if applicable, and entitles that individual to shut down any job site at any time with complete immunity by simply handing the card to a site leader. The site will not restart until the CEO and two safety officers are present and the identified safety concern is adequately addressed. With safety always at the forefront, it is not uncommon for Bill Borger to shut a site down with his S.O.S. card during regular site visits and hold an impromptu safety stand down; a reminder to all team members that safety is everyone's responsibility.

Borger innovators, those team members involved in the creation and/or implementation of a new innovation, receive a minted Innovation Coin and an invitation to participate in the elaborate Borger Innovation Coin game; game participants can win significant scholarships, cash prizes and future opportunities for Borger Bucks when they present their coin during coin challenges from Bill Borger. The Innovation Coin



game has morphed into a type of travel gnome with team members taking pictures with their coin in more than 50 different countries on five continents thus far, all for a chance to win more Borger Bucks in the Innovation Coin photo contests. The coin has been filmed scuba-diving 30 metres deep off the coast of Honduras, was licked by a kangaroo in Australia, and was recently used in the official coin flip of the Calgary Stampeders versus Winnipeg Blue Bombers CFL football game.

The team’s engagement and commitment to its safety culture appears to be working on all fronts. Borger is fortunate to have approximately 10 per cent of its workforce with the company

for 25 years or longer (members of the Quarter Century Club) and more than another third have tenure greater than 10 years; collectively this is an impressive amount of knowledge and experience that the Borger Group is very proud to share. Remarkably, greater than half of all team members are related to someone who is or has worked for the Borger Group from another generation. Family is synonymous with the Borger Group and as such the culture promotes dignity and respect for all through programs like Respect in the Workplace that strives for a harassment-free, discrimination-free environment. “To stay competitive, we need to have an engaged and productive team and safety is one of our advantages,” comments Bill Borger.