

INCREASING SAFE BEHAVIOURS AT CITY CARE

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ABSTRACT

Nearly all workplace accidents are a direct result of people's behaviour. By encouraging our people to increase safe behaviours and decrease at-risk behaviours, City Care has significantly reduced our workplace accidents.

Through Behave Safe, City Care's behavioural-focused health and safety programme, we can track and compare the relationship between safe behaviour and the frequency of Lost Time Incidents (LTIs). Our data shows a direct correlation between Behave Safe practices and our LTI frequency rate. Since starting Behave Safe, City Care has reduced our LTI frequency rate by over 75%.

The behavioural-focus at the heart of Behave Safe's success has since spread into other health and safety, employee welfare and competency areas of our company with similarly positive outcomes.

This paper aims to provide an insight to any water and wastewater industry employer on the processes and systems that can encourage behavioural change and result in improved health and safety outcomes and, in turn, improved service delivery.

KEYWORDS

City Care, Behave Safe, health and safety, Lost Time Incidents, LTIs.

1 INTRODUCTION

City Care is a leading provider of construction, maintenance and management services across New Zealand's infrastructure. Our company operates within four sectors of the national infrastructure services market, being – water and wastewater, parks, facilities management and roading. We employ over 1,000 people nationwide with around 215 people working on our water and wastewater operations.

The average age of our people is 44. This is a key strength within our workforce. In general terms, this section of our workforce are stable employees who bring years of experience, ability and knowledge to their roles. They are also willing to pass on their knowledge and experience to our younger or newer employees through internal training systems. They are often champions of health and safety – spreading the message of thinking and behaving safely.

City Care previously had a culture that seemed to accept that some accidents at work were inevitable because of the nature and physicality of our work. In wanting to change this culture, City Care decided to develop a behavioural-based health and safety programme that worked with City Care's existing systems, rather than purchasing an off-the-shelf solution. From this, City Care's behavioural-focused health and safety programme Behave Safe was created.

City Care believes in maintaining safe, satisfied and productive employees. We do this by considering our people's physical and mental well-being and engaging them in proactively managing this themselves. City Care's three key health and safety and employee welfare programmes focus on encouraging our people and seeking their buy-in to always think and behave safely. These programmes are *Behave Safe* (the system that started it all), our *Employee Assistance Programme*, and our *Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy*.

City Care's health and safety systems are certified to the highest standards and City Care is also externally accredited to NZS 4801 Health and Safety Management.

In November 2007, City Care entered the ACC Partnership Programme at secondary level. A year later we achieved tertiary level. The ACC Partnership Programme encourages employers to take responsibility for their own workplace health and safety and injury management. Being involved in the ACC Partnership Programme encourages employers to raise the level of workplace health and safety management and consequently minimise the costs of work-related injuries. Joining the ACC Partnership Programme represented a major positive step forward for City Care in terms of establishing stronger management systems that create explicit links between good health and safety management and costs. Additionally, it clearly demonstrates to the business the consequences of both safe and at risk behaviours.

Every City Care person plays a vital role in maintaining a healthy and safe workplace by following City Care's 'Health and Safety Golden Rules', which are to:

- behave in a safe way
- follow health and safety procedures for the work being done
- use the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and devices for the job
- report all improvement opportunities, unsafe situations, hazards and incidents.

2 HOW IT ALL STARTED

In deciding to take a behavioural-focus towards health and safety, City Care knew we didn't need a new 'flavour of the month'. We needed to put more strength and meaning into what we already had.

A Behavioural Psychologist was contracted to advise on and assist with developing the behavioural components of a re-focused health and safety programme. Dr Kyle McWilliams, Corporate Learning Ltd, provided expertise and experience in behavioural psychology. Kyle worked with City Care's Business Processes Manager, Denise Bowen, to develop the Behave Safe concept. He helped give it a sound behavioural basis. Kyle then worked closely with our team to create a simple system, tailored to City Care's needs and culture. This approach meant that the system was ours and we had the knowledge and skills to use and develop it as our needs changed.

The principles behind the programme were:

- feedback on workplace performance is a powerful motivator
- positive feedback and indicators will produce positive learning and performance changes.

The first stage in the process was to rewrite the company's existing health and safety plan to incorporate positive behavioural statements wherever possible. A team with representation from across City Care's various operational functions was then established to develop the programme. This team reported back to existing Health and Safety Committees to facilitate the flow of information. To achieve further buy-in, a competition to name the new programme was held for all employees. And from this, Behave Safe was born.

At City Care, behaving safely extends well beyond simply keeping our own people safe. Providing services to over 1.9 million people, our business touches many communities and households throughout the country. City Care's Health and Safety Policy states the company's aim is to conduct our business in such a way as to *maximise* the wellness of our people and those people they come into contact with during the course of their work. We must undertake our work in such a way as to *minimise* the possibility of illness and/ or injury to not only our own people and contractors, but also our clients, their people and members of the public. As such, Behave Safe has a broad sphere of influence. City Care actively encourages our people to take the principles of Behave Safe home with them. Many of our people have taken on board the message of positive feedback in all aspects of their life, not just in the workplace.

A big initiative of the Behave Safe Programme was to create a DVD about how to be safe on the job which our people could take home and watch with their families in order to spread the health and safety message. The

DVD featured two actors from a popular New Zealand TV show, along with several City Care employees. The DVD also provided advice from some of the medical advisors used by City Care.

3 ENCOURAGING UPTAKE

City Care found that making health and safety a compliance issue led to feelings of negativity and mediocrity. By creating Behave Safe for our people, City Care has changed the focus on health and safety from compliance (*'something I have to do'*) to people owning responsibility for health and safety (*'something I want to do'*).

To encourage uptake, City Care established a number of Behave Safe 'champions' who took ownership for sharing information and spreading encouragement about thinking and acting safely. Usually holding contract management or supervisory roles, these individuals helped educate our people on the health, safety and welfare tools available to assist them to protect and care for themselves.

In the nearly five years since Behave Safe was launched, City Care is seeing people take ownership of their behaviour, undertaking voluntary Behave Safe Observations of fellow workmates and themselves, having positive conversations about health and safety and making suggestions for change. Messages are delivered in a respectful and encouraging way in line with Behave Safe's ethos of positivity not negativity.

4 OUR BEHAVIOURAL FOCUSED HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE PROGRAMMES

City Care's health and safety and employee welfare programmes go beyond normal expectations by not only encouraging the use of safe behaviour but by also providing positive opportunities for people to improve behaviour which is not safe or in line with our company values. Our aim is that our people receive clear, consistent and positive messages about health and safety in a manner that helps reinforce positive behaviours.

4.1 BEHAVE SAFE

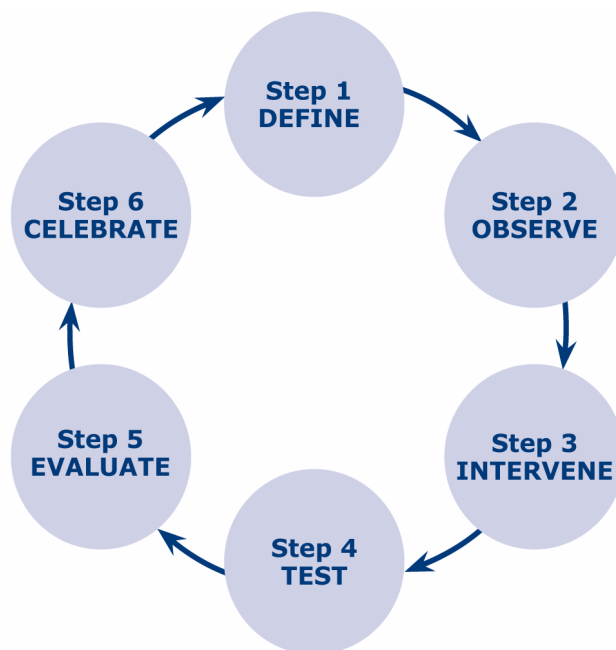
City Care's Behave Safe programme was the first of our behavioural-based programmes. Behave Safe aims to keep our people safe through injury prevention by following the steps shown in Figure 1.

Step One: DEFINE - Behaviourally specify the desirable performance - Identify the safe practices in the workplace and describe them as safe behaviours. Make sure the behavior is observable, reliable, measurable and specific. For example, a driver may specify wearing a seatbelt, driving within the speed limit and driving with two hands on the wheel as desirable, safe driving behaviours.

Step Two: OBSERVE - Observe safe behaviour - With the safe behaviours from Step One on a checklist, observe the actual behaviours in the workplace. Observations are carried out by either co-workers or supervisors or, if an employee works by themselves, they can observe their own behaviour. For example, two workers might alternately observe each other's behaviour on the way to and from a job.

Step Three: INTERVENE - Improve safe behaviour through feedback - Give positive feedback pointing out the safe behaviours of the person observed. Give guidance and feedback on at-risk behaviour so the person can

Figure 1: Behave Safe process steps.



improve their performance and replace at-risk behaviour with safe behaviour. People change their behaviour from at-risk to safe because they want to, rather than because they have to.

Step Four: TEST - Measure safety behaviour - Collate the information on safe behaviours from the checksheets so the safe behaviour is measured. Names are not reported, it is a completely anonymous process.

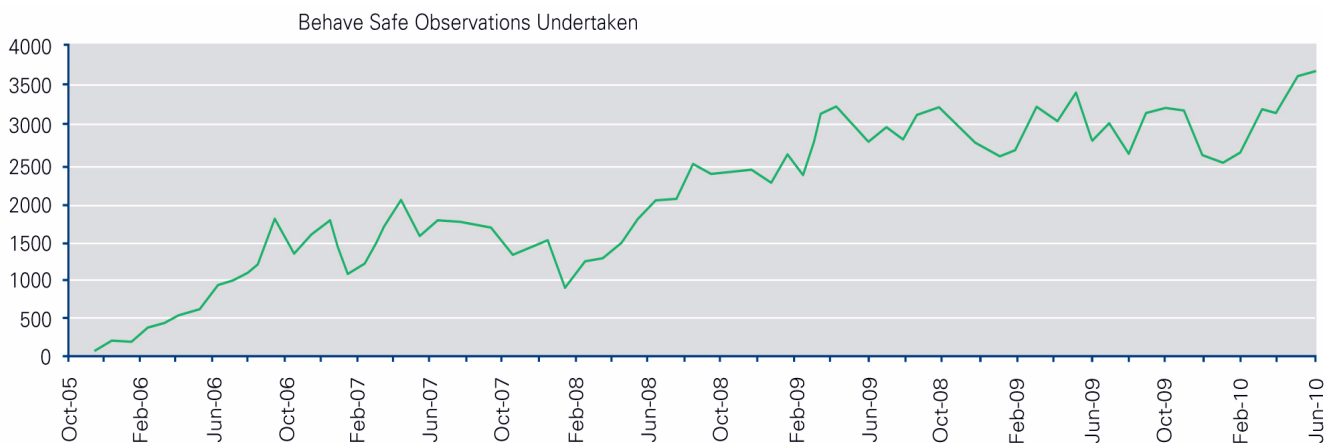
Step Five: EVALUATE - Safety performance - The appropriate health and safety committee reviews the data on safe behaviours and considers the incident reports for the same period. This can identify areas of concern to help prevent future accidents. Each committee updates the checksheet content and style as appropriate.

Step Six: CELEBRATE - Safety performance improvements - Share the information with the work team and the company so people can see their successes. As teams improve in achieving higher levels of safe practices in the workplace, there is recognition and celebration of their progress to acknowledge and encourage safe performance and behaviours. As well as regular Health and Safety Bulletins, this recognition and celebration can include profile articles in City Care's monthly staff newsletter, a special mention at a team briefing or a team breakfast or morning tea.

A fundamental concept of Behave Safe is that behaviours are observable and measurable.

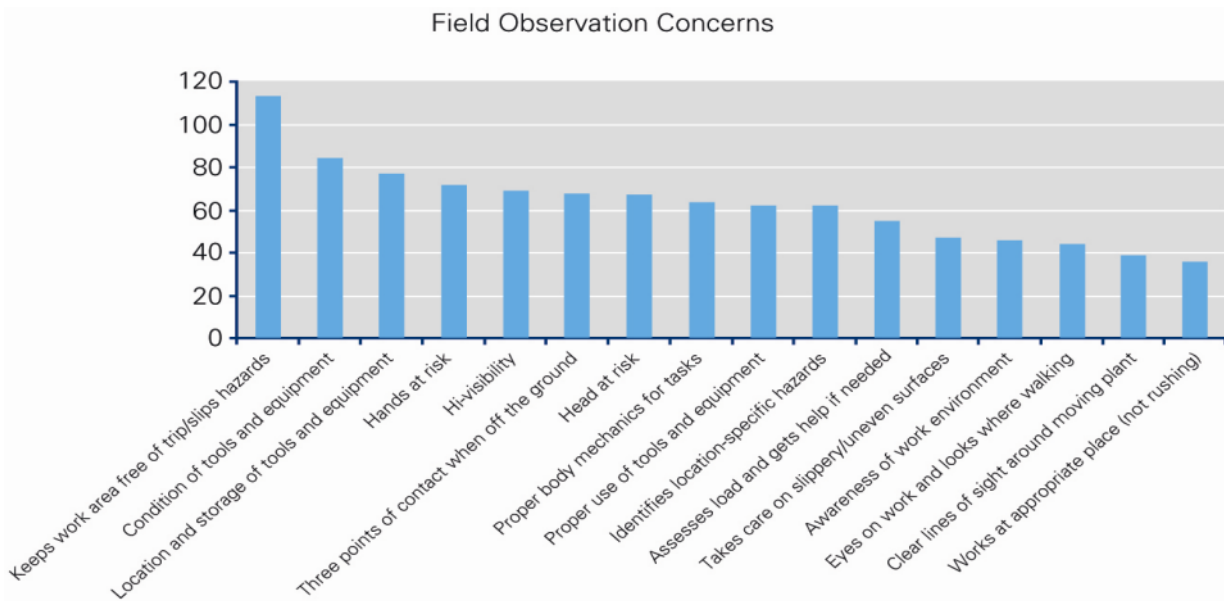
The average number of observations undertaken each month across the company numbers around 2,000. Figure 2 shows the uptake of observations since the programme started in October 2005. There have been over 111,280 observations undertaken since then.

Figure 2: Number of Behave Safe observations undertaken since the programme started.



The Behave Safe observations our people complete are filed in each work area and the data collated. This allows health and safety committee members to analyse safe and at-risk behaviours. The collated data is then able to be displayed to all employees so that they can see the positive impact they are making. The data is also used to identify concerns as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Example of field observation concerns



Each completed Behave Safe observation is important because it reinforces the safety message not just to the person being observed but also the person doing the observation. It also gives City Care the data needed to measure how well the company is performing in health and safety.

City Care views Behave Safe observations as important, but they are only part of our health and safety programme. The major focus is not the systems, such as observations, but rather the people who use the systems. People, not systems, have the biggest impact on health and safety.

4.2 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

Distracted and unhappy employees also have the potential to be unsafe. To be at their best and operating safely, we need our people to be in a positive frame of mind. We understand that as our people go through life, there are times when issues may absorb their attention. This is normal human behaviour; however we do not want to risk the health and safety of our people, or those who come into contact with them, by having distracted employees who are unable to keep their minds on the job. To help our people deal with any work or personal issues and get their minds back on thinking and behaving safely, City Care runs a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

City Care pays for our people to utilise the EAP service and the process is 100% confidential for the employee. Employees can access the service via a freephone number, a website or email address. Help can be provided face-to-face or via these electronic contacts. This helps to achieve uptake with our people, as they can choose which delivery mechanism works best for them and they feel valued and safe from prejudice if they choose to use the service.

4.3 'NOT AT WORK MATE' – CITY CARE'S DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

An impaired employee who is unable to concentrate on correct safe and healthy behaviours is a danger to themselves and others. As such, City Care has a firm but supportive Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy which has been developed in partnership with our company's unions.

The basic principles of the Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy are:

- it's not okay to be impaired at work
- City Care does not condone the misuse of alcohol and/or non-prescription drugs in the workplace

- City Care does not condone any employee reporting to work with their abilities and/or judgment impaired by drugs or alcohol to the degree that their unsafe behaviour could put themselves, or any other person they might come into contact with in the course of their work, at risk of harm
- City Care supports a system of drug and alcohol education and rehabilitation through an employee assistance provider.

When the Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy was introduced, a flyer containing a simplified version of the policy document was made available to each employee. This was followed up by every employee attending a drug and alcohol education session. The impact of drugs and alcohol both on the body, and people's abilities to act in a safe and healthy way, were discussed.

Introduction to the Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy is a critical part of the induction programme when new people commence employment with City Care. During the induction phase, it is reinforced to new employees that it is important they read the information relating to our Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy and ask questions if they are unclear on any matter.

While drug and alcohol programmes are used by a number of organisations, City Care’s programme includes a behavioural focus where education and rehabilitation is critical. It is important to City Care to help any of our people who are affected by drugs and alcohol through focusing on changing their behaviour by attending counseling and advisory sessions. The policy includes rehabilitation options through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). If a person returns a positive test result (indicating drugs or alcohol have been detected in their system), the rehabilitation process commences, as shown in Figure 4.

A Health Rehabilitation Programme initially involves an assessment of the affected employee by an EAP service provider. The cost of this is covered by City Care. A decision is then made as to the specific requirements of the rehabilitation programme. Rehabilitation may range from a number of counseling sessions to external rehabilitation services.

The affected employee will be required to sign a Health Rehabilitation Contract which will include acknowledgement of a positive drug or alcohol test, commitment to a Health Rehabilitation Programme, consent to follow up tests over a specific period and permission for City Care representatives to discuss recommendations and compliance.

Figure 4: Drug and alcohol rehabilitation process



5 CHALLENGES AND CHANGES ALONG THE WAY

Overcoming challenges in uptake of the Behave Safe programme was made easier through ensuring systems were flexible and adaptable as circumstances and situations changed. Behave Safe check sheets were designed to be modified as needed to reflect where the current focus was required for the coming month. For example, one area may need to have a greater emphasis on housekeeping issues one month and the next month a greater focus is needed on safe reversing when driving.

The majority of City Care’s workforce are mobile field staff who are out in the field from day-to-day – they do not spend their time in an office behind a desk or computer. As technology has developed, City Care has introduced the use of PDAs, or palm handheld computers, across our business. The majority of our field staff now manage their work through PDAs, enabling asset data entry and recording direct from the field. In order to ensure maximum flexibility and uptake toward completing observations in the field, City Care developed a check sheet that could be completed and submitted via the PDA network, reducing the need for our employees to manage additional paperwork.

5.1 MANAGING EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

We knew that when we asked our people to change the way they approached health and safety that there would be a range of responses, including resistance. One of the reasons people resist is to avoid the demands of the change. When we do something new, it usually takes more effort. It is human nature to try and conserve energy by doing a task the easiest way. Change also means facing the unknown and this can cause insecurity and anxiety for some, especially if they have been doing a task the same way for a long period of time. Resistance protects people from the unpleasant feelings that change can bring.

Behave Safe champions from within the workforce helped overcome this resistance to conducting observations by endorsing that observations were not meant as a means to enforce the rules, or for management to act as the ‘secret safety police’, but to benefit our people.

Building trust was critical. Observations remain structured around a ‘no surprises’ ethos where observations can be scheduled in one or two days before they are carried out, helping to build trust between the observer and the person being observed. Feedback is delivered immediately after the observation in a positive manner. This helps eliminate feelings of anxiety as there is no time delay in discussing performance. As people became used

to the process and the positive manner in which Behave Safe observations were carried out, resistance was reduced and buy-in increased.

5.2 COMPANY VALUES REFLECT OUR COMMITMENT

To help City Care achieve our vision ‘to be recognised as the leader in infrastructure service provision’, we have a set of five values: One Team, We Create Stars, Considering Tomorrow, Building Partnerships, and Better and Better. These values represent City Care’s culture and provide the framework for how the company does things.

In the early stages of Behave Safe, City Care changed the language in our One Team value to reflect our commitment to positive health and safety focused behaviour. The words ‘We behave safely and look after the safety of others’ were added in order to remind and encourage people to always be thinking and behaving in a safe manner. A critical element of the One Team value is to encourage our people to talk to each other about

Figure 5: City Care's company values



safety as well as behave safely themselves.

5.3 CHANGING TO IN-HOUSE CASE MANAGEMENT

To further consolidate safe behaviour as a critical step in preventing injuries, City Care employed an in-house Case Manager in early 2009. This role currently oversees case management and rehabilitation of injured or ill employees. Much of this work was previously managed by an external service provider. Bringing this work in-house allows City Care to support injured or ill employees in a more timely and efficient way.

Moving forward, the Case Manager role will concentrate more on continuing to educate our people to think and behave safely – taking an ‘injury prevention’ focus rather than an ‘injury management’ focus.

6 RESULTS OF THE INITIATIVE

6.1 SUCCESS SO FAR

Unlike many other organisations, through our Behave Safe programme, City Care is able to track and compare the relationship between safe behaviour and the frequency of Lost Time Injuries (LTIs). Some fascinating trends have emerged.

The green line in the *fish diagram* (Figure 6) shows the trend in the number of Behave Safe observations/hours with the blue line showing the trend in the number of LTIs/hours worked. The graph shows a direct correlation between the number of observations undertaken and the LTI frequency rate. This showed that fewer people were getting hurt at work as more observations were completed.

In February 2008 after this clear pattern emerged, the diagram was distributed to City Care people. It was well received as people could see some significant and positive results. The diagram provided people with tangible results of how their safe behaviour and efforts in undertaking Behave Safe observations directly impacted on the company's decreasing LTI frequency results.

The *fish diagram* also showed that when LTIs appeared to be under control, people moved their attention away from undertaking Behave Safe Observations in order to focus on other tasks. This resulted in an increase in the LTI frequency rate. As can be seen, in April 2007 fewer Behave Safe observations were completed and consequently the LTI rate went up. This told us that we relaxed once we thought things were under control.

In around March 2008 we had two serious harm incidents that shook us out of our complacency. As a consequence of this, a major focus was put on health and safety throughout the company. The Behave Safe programme was given another push with the outcome shown in the next version of the graph – the *lolly diagram* as shown in Figure 7.

We experienced yet another downturn in Behave Safe observations and a subsequent increase in LTIs. Previous experience and lessons learned had allowed City Care to spot this trend earlier and enabled us to put in place another intervention. This time it was a strong focus on managers' performance and incentives. The results appear in Figure 8.

Figure 6: Fish diagram - Trend between LTI frequency rate and Behave Safe observation rate (Oct 05 - Feb 08)

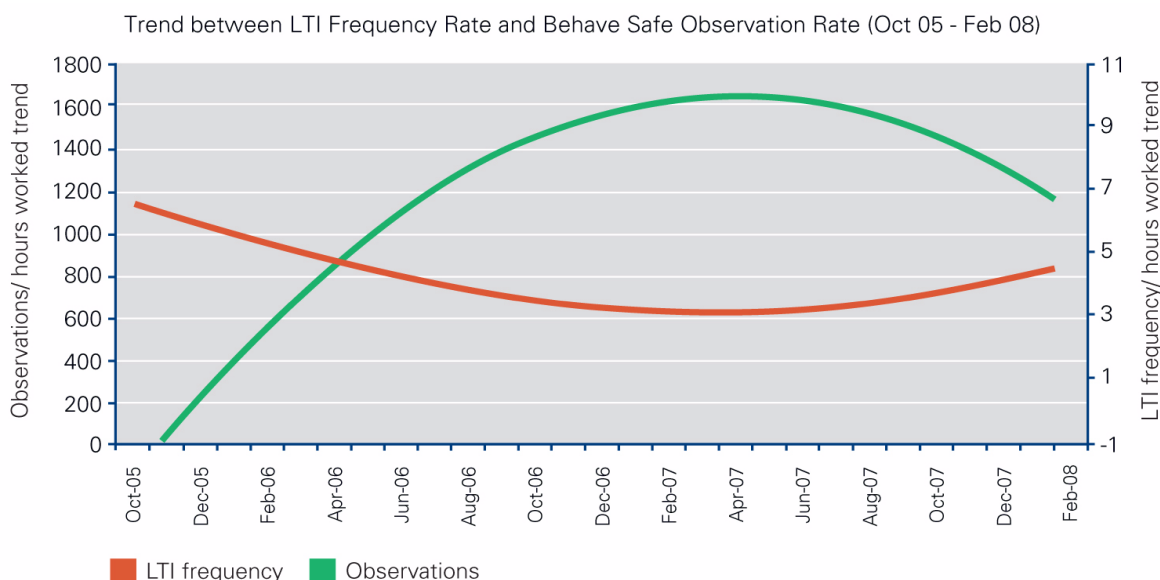


Figure 7: Lolly diagram - LTI frequency rate vs Behave Safe observation rate (Mar 06 - Sep 08)

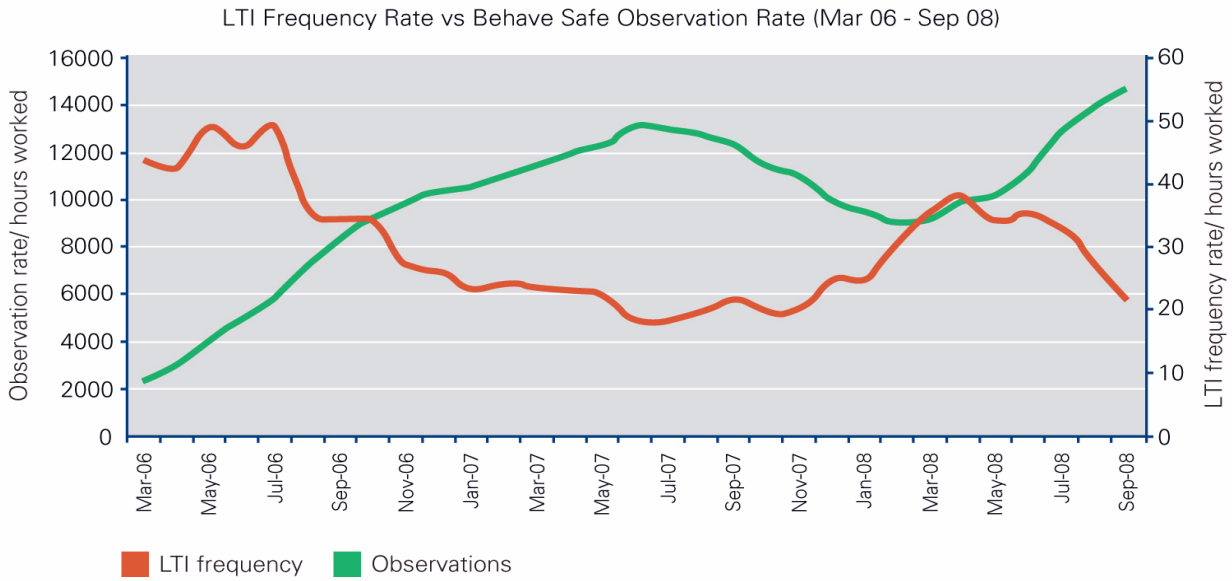
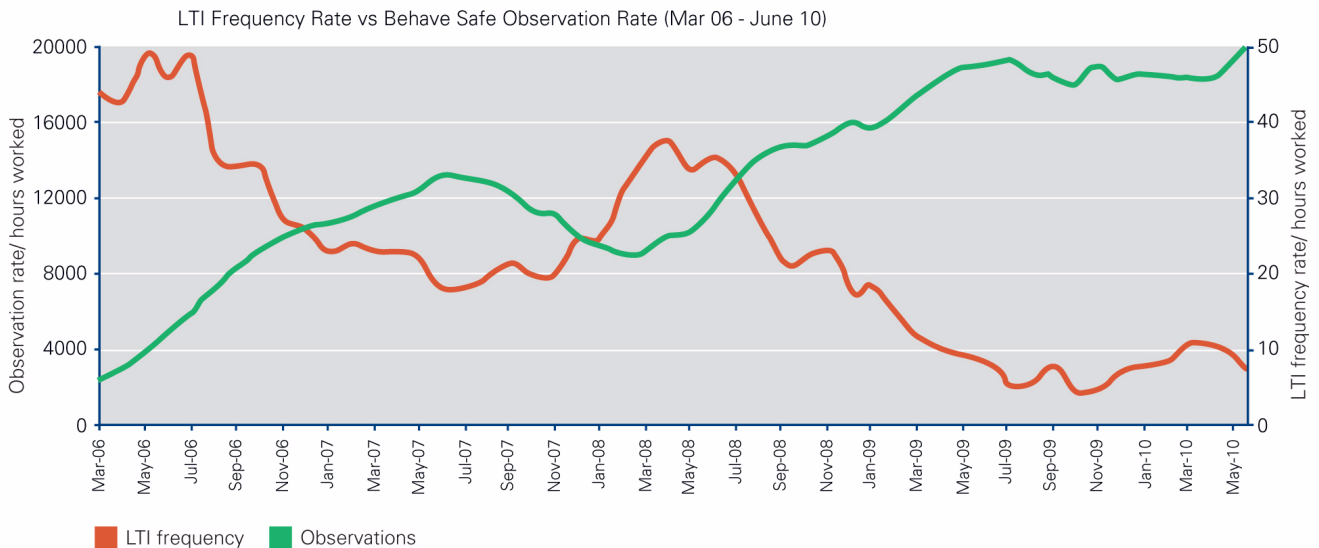


Figure 8: LTI frequency rate vs Behave Safe observation rate (Mar 06 – June 10)



6.2 VERIFICATION FROM PEERS

City Care’s Behave Safe Programme has been recognised and celebrated in New Zealand. In July 2006 Behave Safe picked up a Special Judge’s Award in the ACC Thinksafe Workplace Safety Awards. Behave Safe also received a Special Commendation Award at the 2006 Ingenium Excellence Awards. More recently, our three behavioural-based programmes featured in this paper were awarded the InfraTrain New Zealand Best Practice Award – People at the 2009 Roding Excellence Awards.

Recently analysed results (May 2010) have shown us that City Care has suffered 38% less LTIs than this time last year. This is a great result for our company. The ongoing challenge for City Care is to keep the two lines on the graph from converging again.

7 BENEFITS TO THE WIDER SECTOR

City Care has shared our experience with Behave Safe with various industry groups and individuals. We have made the Behave Safe DVD freely available to the wider industry to demonstrate the company’s belief that best practice in safety management should be a public good, not a company advantage.

Peter Newsome, Senior Health and Safety Advisor for the Canterbury District Health Board (formerly Injury Prevention Consultant for Accident Compensation Corporation) is positive about his experience with the Behave Safe Programme.

“My exposure to workplace injury prevention has been comprehensive by virtue of my experience in both health and safety management in private enterprise and as an Injury Prevention Consultant while with Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). In that time I have been exposed to a diversity of industries and health and safety approaches and systems. Nowadays I find myself pursuing both disciplines within a large and diverse organisation.

While exploring effective injury prevention strategies some years ago it became evident to me that traditional systems based approaches were only a fragment of the whole tapestry required to prevent injury on a sustainable basis. Ahead of the pack, City Care had come to the same conclusion.

Irrespective of the presence or the absence of formal systems, it’s about behaviour – a choice to adopt the desired, defined safety behaviours or not. And the driver for that choice is consequence. And when the desired behaviours are observed and are reinforced immediately and positively, that behaviour will be repeated. If the system is constant, that behaviour becomes a culture, the way we do things here! System + Behaviour = Culture. Where a positive culture is desired the behaviours sought themselves must be positive and reinforced every time positively. City Care’s model produces that most elusive of health and safety goals; a positive safety culture.

This is the realisation that changed health and safety at City Care when they started on the journey in 2005. At the time, it placed them at the cutting edge of safety practice and required real vision coupled with a deep understanding of how the work was done, by whom, why and when. The problem was that there was no model to work to. It had to be created. And here again City Care has placed themselves at the cutting edge by implementing a simple and robust behavioural system which has returned quite startling reductions in Lost Time Injuries over time.

City Care has shown the community leadership, innovation, application and commitment in developing their behavior-based safety programme. Heavily influenced by what City Care has achieved and by my exposure to PHD level consultancy on the subject, I am developing models for introduction within my current organisation.”

8 CONCLUSIONS

We now have data that tells a fascinating and compelling story. It shows how we can reduce our injury frequency if we use the behavioural-based systems we have made available. And, most importantly, it shows the difference our people make by thinking and behaving safely.

City Care has recently signed up to the Business Leaders Health and Safety Forum, administered by the Department of Labour. The forum is about improving, harnessing and focusing safety leadership in New Zealand. It aims for collaborative action on strategic initiatives to move towards Zero Harm Workplaces.

We are working hard to reach the point where all employees understand that self management of health and safety is critical. Not all aspects of in-field hazards can be managed from the office – they need to be managed in the field by those who encounter new hazards each day. We will continue to empower our people to make health and safety suggestions and changes in order to protect themselves and others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City Care wishes to acknowledge and thank Dr Kyle McWilliams for his support and input into the development of our behavioural-focused programmes, in particular Behave Safe.

City Care wishes to acknowledge and thank Mr Peter Newsome, Senior Health and Safety Advisor for the Canterbury District Health Board, for providing the citation comments included in this paper.