

GDX teaches safety lessons

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An investigative field trip on safety brought attention to GDX Automotive's award for environmental health and safety this week.

The auto parts plant in Welland hosted a research visit by the Welland workplace safety committee, (WSC), which is part of the Welland Safe Community Partnership Committee.

The committee was interested in how GDX Automotive won its trophy in February 2004. It wants to take information from GDX Automotive and use it to enhance environmental health and safety throughout the community.

Bill Auchterlonie, of the United Way and workplace safety committee chair, is developing plans to duplicate the workplace excellence that GDX Automotive has achieved.

The Safe Community Partnership hopes to make Welland the safest city possible with safe programs for work, home, schools and the streets.

Auchterlonie and his committee through the Safe Community Incentive Program (SKIP) intend to pass the information on to the 160 or so smaller companies in Welland.

The program is an incentive sponsored by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, (WSIB).

Auchterlonie said, companies will volunteer an employee or manager to



TRIBUNE PHOTO IVAN ZATELLI

Doug Whidden, left, and Danny Kehoe, right, of GDX Automotive show Bill Auchterlonie, Pat Chioccio and Karen Walsh of Welland's Work Safety Committee through the plant. The health and safety committee representatives from GDX represent the union and management in a tour to show the city committee GDX safety improvements that won an award.

be trained in a professional workplace safety program. These companies in turn become eligible for a reduction in WSIB premiums.

"There's a financial incentive for the company to do it, and there are real rewards down the line."

The SKIP initiative also intends to

help high school students get a better understanding of the legal responsibilities owners and managers have to protect young workers.

"That's why we're here really, is to learn," Auchterlonie said.

Danny Kehoe, union co-chair of the environmental health and safety

committee at GDX Automotive, said: "One of the strongest elements in my opinion is the relationship" with the workers towards safety.

"They are experts in their fields."

Doug Whidden, management safety committee co-chair, said with this information the committee can identify anything that needs fixing.

Six union and six management committee members help the workers become aware of the hazards on the job, which range from machinery to products used at the plant. Some of those products contain chemicals.

The safety committee members have gone through a certificate training program and received their certification, except for two committee members, Whidden said.

If the committee knows, there is a problem they have the knowledge from their certification to try and resolve it.

The GDX safety representatives took the city safety committee through the plant to show improvements made throughout the plant. The tour took two hours.

Pat Chioccio, a Welland councillor and chair of the safety committee, told the GDX representatives they have gone "above and beyond" the expectations of the committee.

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