



July 10, 2017 4:08 pm CT

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Safety and environmental innovation, excellence earn recognition

Stronger safety culture across company leads to accolades



737 painters Diego Magallanes (left) and Brian O'Donnell prepare a wing for painting while wearing a fall protection system that features the Piranha Lox True Interlock Harness, named the most innovative safety project in the United States by the U.S. National Safety Council. The system prevents a painter's platform from rising unless the painter is securely connected to the safety harness. (Marian Lockhart photo)



Painter Brian O'Donnell holds the latch that must be securely connected to his safety harness before the platform will rise. The latch is part of the fall protection system that won an award from the U.S. National Safety Council. (Marian Lockhart photo)

As painter Brian O'Donnell stepped onto the platform and snapped together his body harness and fall protection lifeline, he felt an extra measure of safety.

"Painters go up and down all the time as we paint the airplanes," said O'Donnell, who paints 737 wings in Renton, Wash. "With the new fall protection system, the platform won't rise unless my harness and lanyard are completely connected. It's an additional layer of protection."

The new fall protection system used by teams of painters at the Renton and Everett, Wash., sites recently was named the most innovative safety project in the United States by the U.S. National Safety Council. It also received the council's Green Cross safety award.

The system is one of two harness-and-cable systems that prevent a paint platform from rising unless the employee is securely connected to the lifeline. They were developed to help prevent the type of workplace falls that result in about 540 deaths each year in the U.S.

The council also recognized Boeing Fabrication and the 777X program's Design-in Safety and Environment project for significantly improving workplace safety.

"Teams across the company are showing real progress in reducing injuries with innovative actions and a commitment to creating a meaningful safety culture," Workplace Safety Director Amy May said. "The National Safety Council recognition confirms the progress, but we also know there's a lot of work ahead of us to have all employees go home unhurt each and every day."

The 15,000-employee Boeing Fabrication organization was recognized for reducing the number of injuries that caused missed time from work by 70 percent since 2012. Near-miss reporting increased by 800 percent.

Mechanic Dan Evans joined Integrated AeroSystems — one of 12 business units in Fabrication — this year and noticed the focus on safety his first day on the job.

"I had a previous shoulder injury, so I immediately contacted the Industrial Athlete program," Evans said. "They helped develop a plan to keep me safe and prevent any future shoulder issues. Staying safe is integrated into everything we do."

Integrated AeroSystems recently passed the milestone of 3 million employee hours without a lost-work injury.

The Design-in Safety and Environment program is an effort by 777X Engineering and Operations to design Boeing's newest commercial airplane, the 777X, with safety in mind. So far the program has mitigated 1,150 potential safety risks and plans to address 550 more.

One of the identified safety hazards is installing seats in the flight deck, which has led to several back injuries

What are the Green Cross awards?

Boeing is a long-standing partner with the U.S. National Safety Council in efforts to reduce workplace injuries and build a robust safety culture. The Green Cross safety awards are among the highest recognition in manufacturing for innovative actions to improve workplace safety.

The fall protection system used in Renton and Everett, Wash. — known as the Piranha Lox True Interlock Harness — received the Green Cross award in the Safety Innovation category. The 777X Design-in Safety and Environment program was a finalist in that category, while Boeing Fabrication was a finalist in the Safety Excellence category.

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among employees.

"We started by getting video of people installing seats today and then began the design process to find options," design engineer Tim Gallagher said. "For example, mechanical engineer Joe Zeka developed 'Z-lift tooling,' which gets seats in the flight deck without needing to be lifted or carried."

Helping design a safer process brings Gallagher a lot of satisfaction.

"I'm glad our team had the opportunity to develop and implement design changes that can prevent future injuries for people installing our equipment," he said.

By Patrick Summers

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