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# NEIGHBORS

A SERVICE OF ASH GROVE CEMENT COMPANY – SEATTLE PLANT | SPRING 2011

## Ash Grove Delivers “Cans for Kids” Food Drive

High unemployment, fear of home foreclosures and a difficult economy are making it harder for more American families to put food on the table.

In fact, the number of Washington households struggling to put food on the table rose to 367,000 from 288,000 in 2009, a 27 percent increase over the prior year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. More than 224,000 children living in Washington are below the federal

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*In 2010, the Seattle plant collected food and financial donations equaling 764 pounds of food for Northwest Harvest.*

## A NOTE FROM TODD HINTON, PLANT MANAGER



*Todd Hinton, plant manager*

At Ash Grove, safety is a continuous focus. Starting with how plants are built, each company facility emphasizes safety by initiating monthly inspections, holding regular safety meetings and providing ongoing safety training sessions for employees. Plant managers, supervisors and employees work together to ensure a safe working environment and scout for obvious dangers.

“It’s important to have a different set of eyes looking for safety issues. It is easy to become immune to signs, procedures and behaviors,” said Todd Hinton, plant manager for Ash Grove Seattle.

For Hinton, safety was always important but became a very real and personal experience 25 years ago while working for another company in San Antonio, Texas. Hinton was looking into an airslide when suddenly it broke free and blew up in his face. “It was a scary 72 hours,” Hinton recalls. “I was running into walls and furniture. I couldn’t read or look at anything. I could listen to television, but that soon got old. There was nothing to do, except think about what I did wrong and ask myself, ‘what if I hadn’t been in such a hurry?’”

After struggling through his recovery and regaining his eyesight, Hinton became passionate about safety.

“The incident for me became very real. Nothing we do is worth losing an eye or a limb.”

“At Ash Grove, we stress safety as a way of life both at work and at home.” ■

**At Ash Grove, we stress safety as a way  
of life both at work and at home.**

## Workplace Injuries

Ash Grove’s Seattle plant is in the midst of a good safety record, but you won’t hear much about it from the facility management because safety has become such a normal part of the everyday operation among plant employees. What you will hear about is that the Seattle plant received the Ash Grove

Safety Leadership Award (Bronze) in recognition of its safety record.

You can’t blame folks for keeping it in perspective. Every day, workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities can cause pain and suffering to employees and their families. Recent estimates indicate that workplace injuries and illnesses cost our nation’s

businesses \$170 billion per year in wasteful and often preventable expenses.

Ever wonder about the characteristics of these work-related injuries? Is there one day of the week that is safer than others? The Washington State Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks the number and frequency of  
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# Ash Grove Delivers “Cans for Kids” Food Drive

*(continued from front cover)*

poverty level. Requests for emergency food assistance continue to rise as more children know what it’s like to go hungry.

At Ash Grove, we share a responsibility to assist our community and those in need. With the noble goal of ending childhood hunger in our communities, Team Ash Grove launched the annual “Cans for Kids” food drive.

This proud tradition started in 2004, and it pits Ash Grove against Lafarge, a plant across the river where concrete and construction materials are made. Each year, the race is on to see which team can collect the most food and cash donations for Northwest Harvest, a direct service agency whose mission is to fight hunger. The organization supplies food to a network of 300 partner food banks, meal programs and elementary schools throughout the state.

Last year, Team Ash Grove collected food and financial donations equaling 764 pounds of food, while Team Lafarge donated 231 pounds of food. The combined total, an equivalent of 995 pounds of food, was delivered to Northwest Harvest during the end-of-the-year holidays.

Jonathan Hall, Lafarge’s operations manager, presented the highly-coveted “Cans for Kids” trophy to Brian Blackburn, the representative for Team Ash Grove, during Ash Grove’s company Christmas luncheon.

Those served by Northwest Harvest were grateful for the generous donations of time, food and monetary contributions.

The trophy will be on display in the front office until the challenge at the end of 2011. Ash Grove appreciates all the help in making the food drive such a success. ■



Ash Grove employees take every precaution to protect themselves from injuries while working including use of safety harnesses to guard against falls. They attend numerous safety trainings, discussions and meetings to ensure they’re up-to-date on the latest safety techniques.



Every year, Ash Grove employees and families compete with another local cement plant to see who can donate the most to local charity Northwest Harvest to help feed those in the Seattle area who need help providing food for their families.

## Workplace Injuries

*(continued from front cover)*

work-related injuries and illnesses in private industry each year. In a recent study conducted in 2003-2009, the agency looked at characteristics, such as the nature of injury, the parts of the body injured, the source and the event.

### HERE’S A QUICK SUMMARY:

- Sprains and strains account for the highest number of principal injuries each year. Some 15,000 to 20,000 incidents were reported annually. The part of the body most affected, or directly linked to a disabling injury, was the person’s trunk and more specifically, the back.

- The source of injuries, that is the object, substance, exposure or bodily motion that directly produced the disabling condition, was the injured person’s body motion or position. Ground surfaces, such as the floor, and working with containers also registered high when identifying sources of injuries.

- The event that triggered most injuries during this time period was actually overexertion. Contact with an object, equipment or being struck by an object also were cited more frequently than most.

- Finally, most injuries tend to occur on Mondays and Tuesdays. Regardless of the day, injuries more often occurred between 8 a.m. and noon and after a person had been on the job two to four hours. Those who had been with their current employer more than a year reported more injuries than those new on the job.

**WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?** In reality, perhaps not much other than to serve as another reminder that putting safety first is a way of life. For the new employee or the veteran worker, complacency and overconfidence are the real dangers we face. Injuries can happen at any time and on any given day. ■

## EMPLOYEE PROFILE

### Mike Bonar



Mike Bonar

Mike Bonar has cement in his veins. He started in the cement industry in 1975 and has been with the Ash Grove Seattle plant since 1992.

"The cement industry is always changing," said Bonar. "It keeps me on my toes and my mind alert."

Bonar is a shift supervisor for the Seattle plant. His responsibilities include ensuring that all the plant's equipment is working like a fine-quality watch and constantly trouble-shooting any issues that may arise during his shift.

**I love working for Ash Grove. They're an American company that prides itself on producing top-quality products.**

"Mike is an excellent employee," said Todd Hinton, plant manager. "His years of experience and skills make him a great asset to our knowledgeable team."

Bonar started his cement career at a plant in Indiana and then moved to Michigan. From there he started working his way west, doing a stint at a plant in Wyoming, finally settling at Ash Grove's Seattle plant.

"I love working for Ash Grove. They're an American company that prides itself on producing top-quality products. They're a great company to work for, and I enjoy my co-workers at the plant – they're a talented group and like a second family to me. ■

*Even during tough economic times, Ash Grove's goal is to keep as many employees working as possible.*

## Hidden Talents Help Seattle Plant Resume Operations in March

When an oil refinery briefly shuts down operations for either maintenance or equipment improvements, the industry calls them turnarounds. These turnarounds can last a few weeks or several months depending on the size and type of facility.

Ash Grove's Seattle plant underwent annual maintenance that started just before Thanksgiving last year. The work schedule was aggressive and extensive and resulted in a facility that will operate more efficiently and be better able to meet business demands.

Despite a severely sluggish economy and general industry downturn, Ash Grove Cement elected to keep its Seattle plant employees busy during this period. These workers have a wide variety of skills that were utilized during the ongoing maintenance. Not only did this mean continued work for all employees, it has enabled them to showcase skills or hidden talents and take ownership of the extensive maintenance projects.

### On-going training and the company's desire to use in-house talent helps to position Ash Grove as an industry leader.

"Ash Grove also benefits by using our employees' skills because then we rely less on outside contractors," said Todd Hinton, Seattle plant manager.

The following projects, normally outsourced to specialized contractors, are areas where the Seattle plant employees utilized their skills to successfully complete:

- Installation of 110 linear-feet of refractory brick in the kiln. The kiln is 15 feet in diameter and 225 feet long. Each brick is laid one at a time and must be precise to ensure quality and longevity. Approximately 32,000 bricks were used in the installation.
- Repaired cracks to the planetary cooler saddle and drop-out sections, which included arc gouging into 3-inch thick steel followed by re-welding. One of the employees who performed this work had previous experience welding on submarines.
- Repaired five of the 11 compartments of the main "baghouse" dust collector. Each compartment contains 100-plus bags that needed to be removed and replaced. In addition, there were numerous 4-by-8-foot stainless steel sheets welded in each compartment and hundreds of tube sheets and fittings replaced and rewelded.

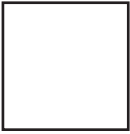
These are just a few highlights of several major projects that were conducted during the past few months. There are many other projects that have used the vast talents of the Seattle plant's employees. On-going training and the company's desire to use in-house talent helps to position Ash Grove as an industry leader. ■





3801 E. Marginal Way, S.  
Seattle, WA 98134-1147

www.ASHGROVE.com



## ASH GROVE WELCOMES 7<sup>th</sup> GRADERS From Whidbey Island Waldorf School

For five years, Whidbey Island Waldorf School has sent a delegation of students to visit the Ash Grove plant in Seattle to learn about cement manufacturing.

The students from Mrs. Oxenvad’s class had recently finished their syllabus in chemistry. Experimenting in lab class, they cooked

limestone to study how cement is made. Now, they were more than ready to see the real process.

When the students arrived they were greeted by their tour guides for the day, Craig MacVeigh, maintenance superintendent, and Jerry Brown, environmental, health and safety manager.

The Ash Grove volunteer instructors had a full hour of class discussion on such topics as the company’s history and how the plant has played a pivotal role in the construction of many major local projects since 1927.

There was a spirited dialogue about the process and the materials used at the Seattle plant. While the Ash Grove team educated and entertained the class, the importance of safety was emphasized.

Armed with personal protective equipment, the students took a walk-through of the plant. The seventh graders excelled at asking MacVeigh and Brown questions. The class was undaunted, even in the face of the ultimate challenge - the elevator to the Pre-Heat Tower was being serviced. To reach the top of the 272-foot tower, the students would have to walk up the stairs.

Once atop the tower, there was time to admire the view. Mount Rainier was visible, and the views of downtown Seattle and Elliot Bay were spectacular. Once back at ground level the group had a close-up look at the cooler tubes and tire handling system before heading back to Whidbey Island. ■



Mrs. Oxenvad’s class from Whidbey Island Waldorf School visits Ash Grove for some hands-on learning about the cement industry.