

Health and Safety

RESOURCE

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The hazards of logging

*No work site
is safe* p. 6

Staying safe in the woods:

10 rules to
remember p.11

Going the Distance

Meet the EHS
principal consultant
for BSI EHS Services
and Solutions p. 21



On the cover: The team at Weyerhaeuser Company's Coos Bay Timberlands includes foresters, and operations and harvest managers. Safety is a top priority for the team.

RESOURCE

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Photo: Ron Conrad

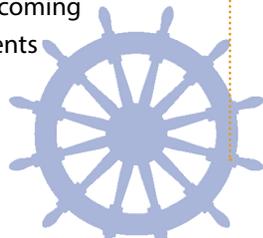
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Going the Distance

What sparked your interest in pursuing a career in workplace safety and health?

I have a civil and environmental engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. My first job out of college was as a land surveyor in remote Alaska. At the time, in the late '80s, I don't recall thinking that careers in workplace safety even existed. I received some training in chainsaw safety, first aid for remote workers, and working around helicopters. This training – along with my first-hand exposure to a few serious injuries to co-workers (including a serious bear-mauling incident) and my experiences with many near hits and work-related hazards – planted a seed that lay dormant for several years.

In the '90s, while working as an environmental engineer in a corporate EHS group, my boss asked for a few volunteers to learn about occupational safety. I jumped at the opportunity. The EHS group was looking to improve their assistance to management and employees at facilities located all over the U.S. That was a turning point in my career.

Company: BSI EHS Services and Solutions, a strategic, management, and technical consultant.

Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) Principal Consultant: Bill Kness, PE, CSP

Workforce: 325 employees for BSI EHS Services and Solutions (USA); 33 employees work out of BSI's Pacific Northwest region

What's a typical day like for you in your current position?

One of the fun parts of being a consultant is that we get to work on a variety of projects and therefore don't have a lot of "typical days." As a principal consultant, I spend part of my time networking and learning about companies' EHS needs and the other part of my time directly helping clients with a variety of topics related to the "E" and the "HS" in Environmental and Health and Safety. On the environmental compliance side of EHS, one day I might be in the office calculating air emissions or stormwater run-off volumes. On another day, I might be inspecting or auditing a facility's compliance with hazardous waste handling or industrial wastewater permitting.

Over the years, the amount of time I spend sitting at a desk versus conducting field work or traveling to and from job sites has varied greatly. Currently, I spend about 70 percent of my time in the office working on client projects or on business development tasks. Finally, I spend some time with management responsibilities, mentoring colleagues, and volunteering with safety-related organizations.

Bill Kness, environmental, health, and safety principal consultant for BSI EHS Services and Solutions, recently conducted hazardous waste operations and emergency response training at Leupold & Stevens, Inc., which makes precision optical instruments and other products.

“As a principal consultant, I spend part of my time networking and learning about companies' EHS needs and the other part of my time directly helping clients with a variety of topics related to the "E" and the "HS" in environmental and health and safety.”

— Bill Kness, PE, CSP



How do you measure success?

As a consultant, an important measure of success is always client satisfaction with the services being provided. Other measures of success include finishing projects on time and on or under budget. But more importantly, I measure success by witnessing improved outcomes for clients with their safety programs and by seeing reductions in risk to employees and property. Although it is rewarding to see the frequency of injuries drop at companies I work with (trailing indicators), I get a lot of satisfaction from helping companies implement successful proactive safety programs (leading indicators). For example, it is a success when you can assist a client with enacting a safety awareness program that is supported at all levels of management, including first-line supervisors and engaged employees.

For many years, I've been helping clients address health and safety issues. I also enjoy seeing companies improve their environmental stewardship. For example, I've been able to assist manufacturers significantly reduce the amount of hazardous waste they generate by assisting them with determining product substitutions or by engineering changes to processes.

But measuring success isn't just about my career. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that I gauge success in life by the amount of trust and respect that I show my family and friends.

"... I measure success by witnessing improved outcomes for clients with their safety programs and by seeing reductions in risk to employees and property."

— Bill Kness



Over the years, Kness has helped employers tackle a variety of workplace health and safety issues. He's also helped employers boost their environmental stewardship, including assisting manufacturers in reducing the amount of hazardous waste they produce.



Photos: Ron Conrad

“Oregon and southwest Washington are fortunate to be the home of some excellent examples of CEOs who understand the significance of treating safety as an integral part of everything they do.”

– Bill Kness



In the past, Kness has helped Leupold & Stevens with stormwater permit compliance, waste reduction, and machine guarding. More recently, he conducted hazardous waste operations and emergency response training at the company. The company's operations include recycling of aluminum “pucks.”

Photos: Ron Conrad



What advice do you have for other safety and health professionals hoping to make a difference?

I believe *the* single most important factor in making a difference for employee safety is to seek and enable management support. Of course, it is important for safety and health professionals to be technically savvy and to continuously learn about the occupational safety topics that are expected for our jobs. But if you are hoping to really make a difference with your company to reduce injuries and make it a better, safer place to work, you must have top management support. The companies that have the best chance at building successful workplace safety programs are those that have leaders who want to create a safe work environment and who back up that goal with resources, such as hiring a safety professional for technical support, training, and by engaging employees and supervisors. I recommend that safety and health professionals look at case studies of companies with CEOs who “get safety” to help position themselves to make the biggest impact on improving safety. Oregon and southwest Washington are fortunate to be the home of some excellent examples of CEOs who understand the significance of treating safety as an integral part of everything they do.

Finally, I hope that I have made a difference in our region by getting involved with leadership in my local chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE). Each year that I've volunteered with ASSE, I know that I've ended up receiving more from the experiences than I've given up in time and effort. ■