



MEDIA RELEASE

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SAFETY EQUALS GREATER EFFICIENCY FOR KOMATSU

Rutherford-based Komatsu Mining Corp has won the icare aware award for June, in recognition of how they are continuously improving workplace safety for their 120-plus employees and making valuable productivity gains in the process.

“Manufacturing is the largest employment sector in the Hunter region with over 11,600 employees,” said Jason McLaughlin, icare’s General Manager Injury Prevention and Pricing.

“However, the Hunter manufacturing industry has a workers’ compensation claims frequency of 54 per 1,000 employees, a rate 93 per cent higher than the NSW manufacturing average of 28 per 1,000 employees.

“It’s great to see a Hunter region employer like Komatsu Rutherford encouraging their workers to come up with innovative ways to make their working day safer. Komatsu’s experience is a great example of how manufacturers can make small improvements in safety which lead to big efficiency gains,” Mr McLaughlin said.

“By simply looking at things through a safety lens, not only has Komatsu Rutherford prevented potential injuries, they’ve also saved three hours of time on a task: a valuable efficiency gain that will improve productivity well into the future,” he said.

It all started with employees at the Rutherford facility, where they conduct service work on mining equipment, approaching management with an idea to improve a process that was posing a potential safety risk to them.

When required to strip back parts of machinery and motors on earthmoving equipment, workers needed to stand on a temporary safety step and spend four hours manually rotating a tension wrench. This was increasing the risk of repetitive strain injuries, as well as slips and falls when workers stood on the step to complete the task.

To mitigate this risk, employees devised the idea of fitting a geared motor to drive the shaft. After consultation with Komatsu’s management and an external vendor, they designed and built a jig to support the motor, removing manual handling and ergonomic hazards involved in the task. They also achieved valuable time savings. The process now takes less than one hour, rather than three to four hours, improving production efficiency by up to 75 per cent.

The Kaizen continuous improvement process is a critical part of the Komatsu culture to improve safety and provide outstanding service to customers. Komatsu’s Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) Manager for Rutherford, Campbell Saunders, explained how the ingenious jig has created significant safety and production improvements.

“We encourage our people to think outside the box and being safety-aware is further evidence of a strong safety culture throughout Komatsu,” Mr Saunders said.

Rutherford Site Manager Sean McNamara said: “This is the kind of innovation we encourage from our people as we strive for our goal of Zero Harm.

“Consultation around safety has now become our norm: health and safety is a priority in all the work we do. We actively encourage all employees to raise any safety-related ideas, innovations or improvements that will reduce or eliminate the hazards and risks,” Mr McNamara said.

We support this through our employee recognition awards, daily safety pre-start meetings, our hazard identification program and safety observation interactions.”

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Who is icare?

icare is one of the largest insurance providers in Australia and a Public Financial Corporation providing workers compensation insurance to more than 3.7 million workers, builders, road users and homeowners in NSW and over 296,000 NSW businesses.

icare is a social insurer (not-for-profit), established on 1 September 2015. It has more than \$32 billion in assets across its schemes and insures state-owned assets, including the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge and Taronga Zoo.

Whether a person is severely injured in the workplace or on our roads, icare supports their long-term care needs to improve quality of life, including helping people return to work.

We're made up of six primary schemes that are committed to delivering better cover, treatment and care to the people of NSW.

Our board of directors reports to the NSW Treasurer.

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