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Trendmaker Homes

Builds a Safe Foundation

As a residential builder of high-end homes, Trendmaker Homes knows its customers expect excellence. But the company doesn't stop at building houses – it also creates the foundation for a safe, healthy work force.

By **Laura Walter**



Houston-based Trendmaker, part of Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Co., employs 130 workers and builds single-family homes in various Houston communities. According to Jacqueline Richter, vice president of admin/hr and safety, each employee is committed to safety.

"It is a total team effort here," Richter explains. "People automatically know that if they're going to work for us, they're going to have to do some things with safety that they've not been required to do at some of the other builders."

Richter and Eva Brunell, admin/hr manager, stressed that every Trendmaker employee has a role in safety. Employees attend and lead regular safety meetings and are trained in various on- and off-the-job health and safety topics. It's a "people first" approach that starts at the top.

"One thing we always heard [from company leadership] is that the single most important asset we have is our people," says Brunell. "You get the im-

pression coming here as an employee that they really do care about the people in the company."

According to Richter, Trendmaker's approach has paid off. The company is in its 18 year average of less than 1 recordable incident rate. Furthermore, Trendmaker works to share its safety successes.

"We want to share what we know," Richter explains, referencing the company's partnership with other builders to promote safety, as well as efforts to work with homebuilder associations. "That's the one thing that is not proprietary – our safety knowledge and expertise. We are willing to share that with everyone who is the least bit interested."

This safety focus also extends to workers' families. The company offers wellness programs, flu shots for workers and their families and safety meetings that focus on personal home safety issues, such as food safety, hurricane preparedness, falls, back injuries, teen driver safety and more.

PROMOTING SAFETY

"The most unique element of our safety program is our promotion of safety outside of our company," Brunell wrote in Trendmaker's ASC application. "Our safety requirements for our contractors are unheard of in Texas. We assist them in improving their safety by sponsoring training events, holding 'safety blitzes' in the field to review general safety, giving awards for improvements, and holding kickoff meetings each time we open a new section to remind them of our safety programs."

The company ensures that everyone is safe at Trendmaker – from employees to potential customers visiting a model home. Employees volunteer to conduct office and new model inspections that could reveal hidden hazards ranging from a vase placed within a child's reach to a bee colony settling into a home's overhang.

Additional special safety considerations at Trendmaker include fall protection for all workers working at height and a "curb to curb" hard hat policy to ensure workers are protected at all times.

Finally, even when the economy took a swing at business and temporarily reduced the number of homes Trendmaker typically builds each year, safety never was on the chopping block.

"Will's message in all the company meetings is we will not drop back on safety," Richter says of company president Will Holder, a leader she describes as a great safety advocate. "It's like putting one foot in front of the other. Safety is a partner to everything we do. It's on every performance plan we have, it's on the development program, it's just ingrained – it's who we are and what we do." **EHS**