

MEDIA RELEASE
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Contact Energy Wins Health and Safety Award

Contact Energy's health and safety culture which empowers employees to fail safely has taken out a top award at the annual Deloitte Energy Excellence Awards in Auckland last night (10 August).

Contact won the Health and Safety Initiative of the Year Award for its Start Small, Think Big entry, which has seen the company implement small, incremental changes to shift from a reliance on rules to more effective leadership and embracing how people think and feel about the company's safety systems.

Contact Energy General Manager of Health Safety and Environment Tania Palmer said winning the award was a powerful validation of the approach, where leaders have enabled an environment for our people, (employees and contractors) to lead and change health and safety, and we have a better understanding of risks and more effective solutions.

"We had made big progress in our safety performance, but we also realised that a top-heavy system where people fear failure won't enable that next step – we needed two way trust, and better collaboration, where safety is part of our DNA," says Ms Palmer.

"A big part of that was understanding that people will make mistakes - and that is okay. What's important is reducing the impact of those errors on our people, our assets and the environment. We now focus on learning and improving and increasing our capacity to 'fail safely'."

Contact has made the journey by setting a bold cultural goal and then implementing a range of small 'experiments' that have had a big impact. One of the most successful has been Learning Teams - replacing the traditional formal investigations carried out after something has gone wrong,

"Learning teams bring together a range of people including our contractors, to understand how something happened, rather than why and who to blame. The insights feed back into the system, leading to continuous improvements and more effective solutions," says Ms Palmer.

Another experiment has been the drive to ‘smash complexity’ in health and safety systems by tapping into the capabilities and experience of the ‘sharp-end’ workers to create simple easy to use procedures, in one case, reducing 60+ safety documents for one part of their operations, down to one document of 16 useful pages.

“We know we’re on the right track when our people are saying they feel better about safety, our leaders are listening and supporting more, and people feel more empowered,” says Ms Palmer.

“The Start Small, Think Big approach can benefit any organisation as it’s inexpensive and simple to do,” says Ms Palmer.

Contact Energy has made its resources on Learning Teams available for free through WorkSafe NZ so they can be utilised by other organisations wanting to give it a try.

The awards night was held at SKYCITY Convention Centre, Auckland, on Wednesday 10 August.

Now in its seventh year, the Deloitte Energy Excellence Awards recognize excellence and achievement across the electricity, oil, gas and petroleum industries.

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Contact’s Learning Team case study is available via the link below:

<http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/hswa/working-smarter/tools-and-resources/case-studies/involving-everyone-in-learning-reaps-benefits-for-contact-energy>

About Contact

Contact is one of New Zealand’s largest electricity generators and retailers. We keep the lights burning, the hot water flowing and the BBQ fired up for around 562,500 customer across the country. Powering the country with electricity, natural gas and LPG, our team of more than 1,000 lives, works and operates in communities throughout New Zealand.

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