



SAFETY AWARDS 2020

Safety is all in the family at Markham District Energy

There's a difference between going by the book and going above and beyond. When it comes to safety, Markham District Energy (MDE) believes in exceeding expectations.

According to Chief Operating Engineer, Craig Graham, it takes continuous work to keep MDE's facilities and energy infrastructure safe and to protect the operation's 24 full-time employees from harm. "Our commitment to doing the right thing, and in some cases doing more than safety regulations require, explains why we have had no injuries in the past 20 years. Safety is hard work, and I'm really proud of our performance."

Owned by the City of Markham, Markham District Energy delivers heating and cooling to 45 buildings and 175 townhomes through a series of interconnected underground pipes. Local hospitals, schools, data centres, condominiums and hotels also rely on MDE to deliver a continuous, reliable flow of energy, and the public that uses these facilities also expects them to be safe places to visit. To produce energy for its customers, MDE uses natural gas, electrically driven centrifugal chillers, generators, and a number of pieces of auxiliary equipment and systems — all of which could represent very real hazards for employees and the public, were MDE not so vigilant in their safety practices. "There's no way we would ever cut corners on safety in order to save money," says Graham.

Two examples demonstrate MDE's commitment to going above and beyond. "We staff one of our plants with two full-time Operating Engineers, on a daily basis, even though the regulations allow this type of



plant to be unattended," says Graham. "We also make automated external defibrillator devices available in all our facilities, to be better equipped to handle an emergency situation, even though the regulations don't require it."

Company representatives have volunteered to teach safety and help prepare post-secondary students at Cambrian College and at Durham College for work placements, and the in-house Joint Health & Safety Committee has implemented a Safety Training Standard for all staff in order to ensure safety is always top-of-mind.

One aspect of safety that is not regulated is corporate culture. At MDE, safety is everyone's responsibility. The lack of hierarchy in the organization's structure allows safety knowledge to be shared easily and for safety procedures to be practised by all. Graham likens the team to a "second family" and says that in the same way that family members look out for each other, so too does the MDE team. "I think it's really telling that we all feel like we won the TSSA Safety Award, not just the Operations team. It's a great reward for all of us, including the City of Markham."