



**“SAFETY IS DEEPLY PERSONAL, A DUTY OF CARE. YOU DON’T WANT TO SEE PEOPLE INJURED; YOU WANT PEOPLE TO GO BACK TO THEIR FAMILIES IN THE SAME CONDITION THEY CAME TO WORK.”**

The Western University Power Plant Team



SAFETY  
AWARDS  
2023

LEGACY AWARD

## Care for People Drives 20 Years of Safety Success

For two decades, Western University's Power Plant team has maintained an impeccable record of zero lost-time incidents. This safety achievement demonstrates the plant's robust safety culture, earning the 15-strong Power Plant team the TSSA Legacy Award for 2023.

Established in 1922, the central power plant supplies the campus with high-pressure steam through its 23,082 kW rated 1<sup>st</sup> Class plant. Comprising steam boilers, water chillers, and air compressors, this facility also fuels the campus district energy system for 66 diverse campus buildings. Structures dating back to the power plant's inception coexist alongside new builds. One such new addition is the Ronald D. Schmeichel Building for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Western University's first net-zero energy building, set to open later in 2023. The power plant also provides high-pressure steam to the London Health Sciences Centre's University Hospital, a one-million-square-foot acute care facility.

Despite the complex and expanding scope of operations, the Power Plant team has a wide-ranging toolkit to tackle new challenges. Clear safety policies, sophisticated maintenance systems, frequent safety meetings and briefings, and an extensive training program are among the tools in use. Just as a computer's hardware relies on software, these tools are guided by the fundamental principles this team upholds.

“Safety is deeply personal, a duty of care,” said Stephen Burton, Manager Power Plant Operations and Chief Engineer at Western University. “You don't want to see people injured; you want people to go back to their families in the same condition they came to work.”

Stationary Engineer Lewis Pellar, who represents workers on the joint health and safety committee, shared the same view. “I want the new employees here to have a fulfilling, injury-free career, pursuing the trade they've chosen. Similarly, I want our senior employees to enjoy the retirement they've been working towards throughout their careers.”

A profound sense of caring for people motivates the Power Plant team to go above and beyond and to keep innovating. At the power plant, a team of 13 stationary engineers often work alone after hours, such as nights or weekends, to ensure high-pressure steam, chilled water and compressed air are available 24/7, 365 days a year. Working solo exposes these solitary workers to risks in the event of an injury or a medical emergency.

Thinking outside the box, the team devised a 'working alone' program that leverages technology and automation to improve safety for lone workers. The program requires the lone workers to acknowledge a system alarm every hour. If they fail to do so, the system automatically alerts Campus Safety and Emergency Services to perform a wellness check on the operator.

“Statistically, it's harder now to maintain a zero lost-time incident record,” said Stephen. “The longer you go, the harder it is to maintain that record. Real safety is what people are doing when no one's watching. We have a great safety culture here at Western University.”

Lewis believes that openness, communication, and the absence of blame are vital to sustaining a successful safety culture. “It's crucial to cultivate an environment where open communication is encouraged, and individuals feel comfortable voicing their concerns,” he said. “If a safety incident occurs, we should address it openly. Let's talk about what exactly happened. How can we approach it differently next time? What changes, whether procedural, behavioral, or engineering-related, are required? The key is to openly discuss things like these and follow up with actions.”