

Ensuring Quality & Safety

Story and Photos by
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The Hard Hat of the Year, the North Atlantic Division's top award for quality, recently went to Europe District's Peggy McBride.

McBride, a construction quality assurance program manager, received the award for 2004 because of the many efforts and programs she has helped implement within the district during her tenure.

There were many reasons for her nomination, said Fritz Kroesen, regional program manager. McBride and Kroesen worked together to steer one construction project back in the right direction.

"Since that salvage operation, I observed her growth in areas of Europe District's operations where improvements were sorely needed, such as Q/A training, and safety training, for the folks in the far flung reaches of our district," said Kroesen.

"In addition to her vast knowledge and

experience in Q/A, she is also an expert in construction safety," said David Stanton, the Europe District occupational health and safety manager. Stanton recently deployed to Mississippi as the Task Force Hope Recovery Field Office safety manager leaving McBride partly in charge of the safety office while he's deployed.

Stanton added that McBride was a natural choice because of "her desire to learn more of the safety management side of my job."

Over the years she has done quite a bit of traveling within the district's footprint for a very important reason – to make sure contractors are living up to the Corps' standards of safety and quality.

"We travel to our area offices and projects on a regular basis, working as an effective team in looking at not just safety and quality, but the overall construction program," said Stanton.

McBride practically started a refresher Q/A



◀ Peggy McBride, construction quality assurance program manager for the Europe District, questions Andreas Meyer, the contractor's quality control manager about a gap between a window and the wall. This type of question and answering is how quality assurance representatives learn about projects and where there might be deficiencies that need to be corrected.

training program for Corps' personnel in the field single-handedly, said Kroesen. And, she started a construction quality control and safety training program for contractors throughout the Europe District's reach.

"All these areas needed drastic measures in order to set the yardstick for success up where it ought to be, and Peggy not only started these efforts, but served to be the active participant in effectively carrying out the program," Kroesen said.

Being awarded the Hard Hat of the Year is the culmination of efforts that started out with visits to Israel and Turkey to get the standards where they needed to be.

In Israel this sort of training paid big dividends; not only because it improved the overall safety of the job site and quality of work being performed, but also because the contractor won an award because of the increased performance. The Yoseftal Prize, which is given every three years to recognize the highest safety standards on a construction site by the Israel Ministry of Labor and the Israel Safety Institute couldn't have been achieved on this site had it not been for McBride's involvement with making safety better.

These programs, and attention to detail from field visits from safety and quality assurance representatives, seem to be paying off because this year the district has also seen fewer accidents than in previous years.

"One reason I got it is because we have so many good people out in the field doing Q/A who are continuously

willing to learn," said McBride of the team members she works with.

These quality assurance representatives are important because they communicate with the Bauamt (the German government construction agent), the contractors, and the customer.

"Q/As are the first faces people see so they need to be professional and knowledgeable," McBride said. "They're the first line on the ground so they need to make a good impression.

The Q/A representatives also keep their eyes open because "they're safety's eyes in the field," she said.

What started in Turkey and in Israel has also been brought to other places and McBride said she travels anywhere the district is doing business.

"Anytime I can help anyone in the field, it's a good thing," she said, whether it is Corps' personnel or teaching contractors the standards the Corps expects.

McBride also found herself working on a team with other Europe District employees to get essential testing equipment to the field offices. They



▲ Peggy McBride talks with the contractor about removing cords from a flight of steps or closing that portion of the steps for safety reasons.

identified what equipment was needed so those doing quality assurance could meet quality assurance standards. Some of the things the team came up with to put in these field kits were: a camera, tape measure, hygrometer and temperature gauge, though it is full of many other useful items as well.

McBride believes that equipping people with tools, or the training to do their jobs, will yield a quality product in the end.

"It's important to train because quality is one of the Corps' core competencies," she said.