

It’s an honor to be invited here today as you prepare to recognize those companies that are the “best of the best” in safety and health.

Since the Minnesota Safety and Health Conference convention began in 1934, its attendees have been the State of Minnesota’s eyes and ears, helping us stay alert to the hazards we may encounter every day while at work, at home, at play, and on the way.

Those safety and health hazards continue to change just as fast as the weather here in Minnesota, and you, as members of our state’s safety and health committee, have been the driving force that has kept us informed about how to identify and address hazards.

The events of September 11 highlight how quickly new challenges can affect our community.

New challenges such as

- having effective emergency response plans,
- learning more about bioterrorism,
- responding to new chemical weapons, and
- addressing public and personal safety.

You, and the companies and organizations you represent, have shown great leadership in allocating the time and resources needed to attempt to identify the hazards and reduce accidents and illnesses.

Whatever role you play in safety and health, whether it’s working on the road, in the front office or on the line, you have all fostered a spirit of cooperation that goes beyond the ordinary to improve the quality of safety and health for Minnesota’s workplaces, roadways and communities.

Every year, thousands of Minnesotans are accidentally injured and more than 1,600 are killed at home, at work or on the roads.

Each day, more than 450 Minnesota workers are injured or become ill from job-related causes.

These accidents and deaths exact a toll on workers and their families; they also affect business costs and productivity.

Our State’s workers’ compensation costs are estimated at \$1 billion almost every year. This does not count other costs, such as delayed production, hiring and training workers, pain and suffering, and those economic losses to workers and their families.



However, because there's been a focus by employers, employees and government on reducing workplace injuries, the number has been steadily dropping - nationally and here in Minnesota. In fact, we are safer at work than we are on the highways or in our homes.

The Governor's Safety Awards program recognizes the work you do to continue to bring the numbers down.

Your ability to handle complex safety and health concerns before an accident happens ensures that more Minnesotans will get home safely every night.

Some of you are here for the first time today to receive an award, some of you have been award winners for more than a decade ...

On behalf of all Minnesotans, I appreciate the work that you have done and continue to do to keep our state one of the safest and healthiest in the nation.