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Deschutes County Road Department joins safety recognition program *County program achieves SHARP certification*

Oregon OSHA will welcome the Deschutes County Road Department to the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) this month.

SHARP provides an incentive for Oregon employers to work with their employees to find and correct hazards, develop and implement effective safety and health programs, and continuously improve. The ultimate goal of SHARP is to encourage employers to become self-sufficient in managing workplace safety and health issues. Currently, 137 employers in Oregon participate in SHARP, including 73 employment locations that have graduated from the program.

The Deschutes County Road Department manages 830 miles of county roads and 66 bridges. Workers are charged with routine road and bridge maintenance; vegetation control; removal of roadside hazards; installing, repairing, and replacing signs, pavement markings, and striping; emergency response to natural disasters; and winter snow removal. Employing 64 full-time workers, the county road department began working toward SHARP about two years ago.

“We joined SHARP to strengthen safety programs that were already in place and to identify systems that were missing,” said Dennis Morris, support services manager for the county department. “The process unified and strengthened our safety committee to work for a specific goal. We now understand that maintaining and improving our safety and health culture will take a continued and combined effort from all of us. The SHARP process has been a very positive experience for our department.”

Participation in SHARP doesn't eliminate regulatory enforcement, although SHARP participants do receive a limited exemption from programmed inspections. Employees retain all workplace safety and health rights contained in the Oregon Safe Employment Act. Oregon employers that have been in business for more than one year are eligible to apply for SHARP regardless of size or type of business.

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Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. For more information, go to www.orosha.org.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.