



BEYOND THE BOARDROOM



Worker Safety: More Than Just Compliance

PotashCorp Teams with Department of Labor to Create North Carolina's Most Successful Training Programs

As Commissioner of Labor for North Carolina, Cherie Killian Berry could be viewed in some business circles as the most feared woman in the state.

She, however, just wants to be known as “Coach.”

In five years in office, Berry has brought a culture of openness and cooperation to the Department of Labor (DOL). It's a business style that promotes stakeholder engagement and trust. PotashCorp couldn't be more pleased.

“I'm trying to redefine the role of Labor Commissioner — from being a cop to being a coach,” says Berry, who is responsible for the health, safety and general well-being of more than 4 million workers. “I would much rather have companies spend their money safeguarding lives than paying fines. So we're building greater trust and dialogue between this department and the businesses of this state.”

The results of this unconventional approach are undeniable: In Berry's first four years in office, worker injury and illness fell to

the lowest rate ever in North Carolina — which now possesses the third best safety performance in the United States.

“And we’re just getting started,” says Berry, who became North Carolina’s first female labor commissioner, and the first female Republican elected to a statewide office, on January 6, 2001.

As she reinvents the way state government and commerce work together, she points to her relationship with PotashCorp’s phosphate operations in Aurora as the model for continued progress.

“I wish all companies were as engaged as PotashCorp,” she says. “When other businesses start out hesitant to work with us, we point to PotashCorp as a company to emulate. Quite frankly, if all companies were like them I doubt we’d even need a labor commissioner at all.”

Working together, the 1,045 employees at Aurora and the DOL’s 425 staff have developed three programs that Berry considers the hallmark of her tenure:

- The state’s first safety-accreditation program dedicated exclusively to the mining industry.
- A vibrant apprenticeship training program, in which PotashCorp has participated more than any other company in the state.
- An advanced-studies apprenticeship program.

“None of these programs would have been possible without PotashCorp working with us at every level of this department,” Berry says. “Not only do they want to help, but they are incredibly open with both their facilities and their expertise.”

North Carolina’s Latest Safety “Star”

Early in her tenure, Berry established award and recognition initiatives aimed at reducing on-the-job injuries and fatalities. Companies that can demonstrate self-sufficiency in their ability to control hazards at their worksites can qualify for the “Carolina Star,” which exempts recipients from regularly scheduled safety and health inspections for three years.

Berry calls the “Carolina Star” the highest award the state can give.

In 2001, she expanded this popular program with the creation of industry-specific Star awards. First was the Building Star — focused solely on the construction industry.

With more than 480 mines and quarries employing 4,875 workers, it became clear to her that North Carolina also needed a Mining Star — a safety program exclusive to the mining industry.

Beginning in November 2001, PotashCorp opened its Aurora facilities to the DOL and made company experts available to help draft compliance criteria for the Mining Star. In March 2003, it became the first company to receive Mining Star accreditation.

“That’s a perfect example of how open and transparent PotashCorp is,” Berry says. “We interviewed virtually every employee at the Aurora site before granting PotashCorp its Star.”

“For us to develop safety standards for a specific industry, we first needed a company willing to train us on worksite conditions unique to that industry. We also needed a company that we both respected and trusted. To us, PotashCorp was the logical choice to help us establish the Mining Star. And they came through for us, as usual.”

“It’s also a reflection of the value PotashCorp and all its employees place on safety. The workers were so genuinely proud to win the award that when we presented them with the Mining Star flag, several employees immediately ran out and sent it up the flagpole.”

To Berry, the programs she and PotashCorp work on together are not simply about doing good. They are good for business and for the citizens of North Carolina.

“When you truly care like PotashCorp does, employees want to give back, neighbors want you to succeed and government wants to help,” she says. “That is what PotashCorp has achieved in North Carolina.”