

Larry Walkoviak Accepts Commissioner's Fiscal Year 2011 Safety and Occupational Health Award for Upper Colorado Region's Injury Prevention Efforts

By Lauren Meredith



Reclamation Upper Colorado Regional Director Larry Walkoviak accepts the Commissioner's Fiscal Year 2011 Safety and Occupational Health Award from Commissioner Michael Connor on December 13. [Photo Credit: Lauren Meredith]

Accidents happen, just not under Larry Walkoviak's watch.

For preventing injuries and reducing injury rates among Reclamation employees, the Upper Colorado Region, under the leadership of Regional Director Walkoviak, was awarded the Commissioner's Fiscal Year 2011 Safety and Occupational Health (SOH) Award.

"As part of the Department of the Interior, we were tasked by the administration to reduce the number of employee injuries, with goals to meet each year through 2014," said Commissioner Michael Connor. "I am happy to say that Reclamation met its injury reduction goals for Fiscal Year 2011. In the Upper Colorado Region, Larry Walkoviak has been an outstanding leader, setting the standard for all of us in achieving our safety goals."

Under Walkoviak's guidance, the Upper Colorado Region achieved the lowest recordable injury and lost time accident rates among any region, and had reductions from its five year average in both rates. The

Region also created a SOH action plan through close coordination with all of its area offices and developed a more focused approach to accident investigation, preventative measures and providing SOH support to supervisors.

The Commissioner's SOH Award is presented annually to the Region or Office achieving the best overall results in the conduct of its SOH Program.

Efforts from all regions and offices, however, kept employee focus on injury prevention and reduction and resulted in significantly fewer injuries and illnesses among all Reclamation employees.

"We reduced employee injury rates to just over two lost time injuries per 100 employees, the lowest level in over five years," said Commissioner Connor.

Reclamation also achieved an over 20 percent reduction in the average injury compensation costs for the previous five years. The compensation cost reduction in 2010 was over \$500,000, the largest in the Department of the Interior.

Efforts from the different regions and offices included specific safety training for Reclamation employees, asbestos inspections at regional facilities and sponsored presentations for more than 200 employees during DOI Safety Week.

Commissioner Connor echoed the Departmental focus on employee safety and injury prevention and reduction when he thanked managers and employees during the recent All-Employee meeting in Denver.

"The work we do – providing water and electric power – has many dangers," said Commissioner Connor before a filled room of Reclamation employees. "But, with your help, we do that work safely."