

Best-In-Class Thoughts

"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often."

– Winston Churchill

"All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual."

– Albert Einstein



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Note from Leanne

As we close the books on another successful year, I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone for your hard work and Best-in-Class efforts in 2013. Looking back on last year, many of the successes we experienced in 2013 were directly related to your hard work and dedication: reduced injuries and injury rates across the MER Family of Companies, increased employee development opportunities through safety-specialty teams (CSR Specialists) and cross-over initiatives (Drummac U), growth of the Safety Services product line (Confined Space Standby and Commercial Training)...the list goes on and on.

Now, it's time to look ahead to 2014 and see how we can build on our achievements and create new opportunities for success. And like last year, that success will begin and end with our employees; your active involvement in our Employee Development Program, your safe work practices each and every day and your commitment to our culture will help define our organization as a Best-in-Class company. Here's to 2014 and here's to you. Cheers!

Best-in-Class Training

One of the aspects of our Safety Program that is most notably at a higher level than much of our industry is our employee training program. MER's training program has two main objectives:

1. Develop employee knowledge base through small classes with methods of training that reflect how our employees learn best.
2. Ensure the highest level of knowledge retention through skill assessments (practical, verbal and written).

We've had a number of clients inquire about our training methods and ask to observe training classes; of course, we accommodate such requests and soon after, many of them request information about our commercial training services. Our program is that good.

As we continue to educate our employees in advanced hazard assessment and mitigation and in high-level safety concentrations (i.e. confined space rescue), we should expect our employees to perform at a more sophisticated level. We're teaching our employees that there are better, safer and more efficient ways to complete tasks and with that advanced knowledge, our employees are challenging traditional methods of job execution; these types of challenges illustrate the evolution of our company and the growth of our employees. They also help widen the gap between MER and our traditional competitors with an intangible quality that more and more clients are using to choose service providers.



Winter Driving Kit

- Ice scraper
- Bag of abrasive material (sand, salt or cat litter)
- Cloth or paper towels
- Booster cables
- Small snow shovel
- Snow brush
- Traction mats
- Window-washing solvent
- Flashlight
- Warning flares/ triangles
- Blanket
- Cellular phone
- Gloves or mittens

Ice and Snow – Take it Slow

Severe weather can be both frightening and dangerous for automobile travel. Drivers should know the safety rules for dealing with winter road emergencies. Additionally, motorists should be cautious while driving in adverse weather. Some tips from AAA are below:

Winter Driving Tips

- Make certain your tires are properly inflated.
- Never mix radial tires with other tire types.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze-up.
- Always look and steer where you want to go.
- If possible, avoid using your parking brake in cold, rainy and snowy weather.
- Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface (wet, ice, sand).



Tips for Long-Distance Winter Trips

- Watch weather reports prior to a long-distance drive or before driving in isolated areas. If you must leave, let others know your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.
- Pack a cellular telephone with your emergency phone numbers, plus blankets, gloves, hats, food, water and any needed medication in your vehicle.
- If you become snow-bound, stay with your vehicle. It provides temporary shelter and makes it easier for rescuers to locate you. Don't try to walk in a severe storm. It's easy to lose sight of your vehicle in blowing snow and become lost.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna or place a cloth at the top of a rolled up window to signal distress. At night, keep the dome light on if possible. It only uses a small amount of electricity and will make it easier for rescuers to find you.
- Make sure the exhaust pipe isn't clogged with snow, ice or mud.
- Use whatever is available to insulate your body from the cold (e.g. floor mats, newspapers).
- If possible run the engine and heater just long enough to remove the chill and conserve gas.

Tips for Driving in the Snow

- **Accelerate and decelerate slowly.** Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids.
- **Drive slowly.** Everything takes longer on snow-covered roads. Accelerating, stopping, turning – nothing happens as quickly as on dry pavement.
- **Increase following distance.** The normal dry pavement following distance of three to four seconds should be increased to eight to ten seconds.
- **Know your brakes.** Whether you have antilock brakes or not, the best way to stop is threshold braking. Keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.
- **Don't stop if you can avoid it.** There's a big difference in the amount of inertia it takes to start moving from a full stop versus how much it takes to get moving while still rolling. If you can slow down enough to keep rolling until a traffic light changes, do it.
- **Don't power up hills.** Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads just starts your wheels spinning. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill and let that inertia carry you to the top.

For more information on winter driving, view the [How to Go on Ice and Snow brochure](#).

<http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/roadway-safety/winter-driving-tips/>

There's an App for that!

The Weather Channel



With over 200 meteorologists and our ultra-local TruPoint 15-minute forecasting technology, The Weather Channel® helps you plan the best day possible. The Travel layer, in our phone map tab, allows you to save your favorite travel routes and commutes to see how they will be impacted by the WEATHER™.



Professional Resolutions

Many people make New Year's resolutions with the goal of enhancing or improving their lives. The most popular resolutions tend to be personal in nature like losing weight, saving money, or spending time with family. This year, challenge yourself to also make a professional resolution. With a few simple tips and some hard work, you can ensure that this is your most successful career year ever!



Get Excited – People work harder and find more success when they are passionate about their jobs. Take a few minutes to brainstorm and jot down what you love about your area of expertise, your job duties, your company, and your industry. This will help you remember why you got started in your particular field, job, company, etc. and hopefully reignite some passion. Over time, people tend to get caught up in the minutia of the workday and lose that great feeling of accomplishment that accompanies starting a new job or learning a new skill. Your passion and excitement will drive you to work harder and therefore get more accomplished.

Fitness Challenge

One Controlled Wall Squat

"The more mobile you are, the better you can move your joints through their full range of motion and the less likely you are to be injured," says kinesiologist and rehab expert Dean Somerset, C.S.C.S. This test, he says, "will expose limitations in your ankles, hips, neck, and upper back—places where most men are bound up."

The Test: Stand facing a wall with your feet shoulder-width apart and toes 2 inches from the baseboard and turned slightly out. Keeping your feet flat, chest up, and back naturally arched, see how far you can lower your body without touching the wall or falling backward.

The Scorecard:

Men's Health Fit: Full squat in control

Above Average: Halfway down

Ordinary: Less than halfway

<http://www.menshealth.com/fitness/strength-fitness-standards>

Become an Expert – Many jobs require us to be generalists – to have a wide variety of knowledge and skills that are necessary to successfully complete our job duties. This year, broaden your horizons even further and become a specialist in a few areas. For example, if you work in marketing, learn everything there is to know about social media, if you abate asbestos, learn the asbestos regulations and methods of removal inside and out. Pick something (or a few) aspects of your job and hone your expertise. Being the companywide expert in a certain area will help you get noticed as it shows initiative and competence.

Network - Build relationships within your company. It is easier to accomplish job duties when you have a good working relationship with colleagues since it often takes interdepartmental cooperation to complete projects and tasks. People also tend to enjoy their jobs more when they have friends in the workplace. You don't have to attend Happy Hour every week or invite co-workers over for the holidays, but a smile and a "Good Morning" will go a long way!

Speak Up & Volunteer - If you have a great idea, don't be afraid to speak up. Even if your project or proposal isn't feasible at the time, your suggestion will show great initiative. Also, if your company does decide to enact your idea further down the road you may be picked as a team leader! Similarly, volunteer to join a team or work on a project that is slightly outside of your normal responsibilities. This will break up your normal routine, adding some excitement into the workday and will also impress your supervisor.

Cheers to a Productive and Successful New Year!

ENI WEB – A Successful New Year

Wellness Tips

Health Benefits of Spices & Herbs (continued)

Cayenne can actually relieve sinus congestion! So next time your allergies or a cold leave you feeling stuffy, slip some cayenne into your food for natural relief. Cayenne is a great spicy accompaniment to chicken, salads and of course Mexican food!

Ginger is wonderful for relieving nausea. A study at Brigham Young University actually found that ginger works better than motion sickness drugs at preventing nausea. Ginger pairs well with citrus fruit and sweet potatoes and is also great added to tea.

Cilantro provides a natural pick-me-up as it helps remove toxins from the body. Add cilantro to your food when you're feeling tired, depressed, or just want to sustain energy naturally. Cilantro tastes great in salsa and as an accompaniment to seafood.

[ENI Web – Benefits of Herbs and Spices](#)



MER Safety Takes Gold!

MER is a Gold winner of the 2013 NRC/RT&S Safe Railroad Contractor of the Year Contest.

"Each of these companies should be commended for their extensive efforts to promote and improve safety in the rail contracting industry, and for subjecting their full safety program and range of practices to an extensive outside review. These companies represent the very best of the NRC and the entire railroad construction and maintenance industry." - National Railroad Commission (www.nrcma.org)



MER would like to thank all of our employees for their commitment to Safety.

Values

Professionalism

Integrity

Mutual Respect

Discipline

Employee Development Corner

What are you looking to accomplish in 2014? The New Year is a great time to begin thinking about goals for the future. Take a look at the work and training completed over the past year; reflect on your accomplishments and areas where you would like to grow. Take some time to complete a self-assessment and develop a plan for yourself. A good individual development plan should be interesting, achievable, practical and realistic. There are many opportunities within the MER Family of Companies for those who are motivated and willing to work towards them.

Step 1 - SELF-ASSESSMENT

Identify skills, abilities, values, strengths and weaknesses:

- Use self-assessment tools such as Humanmetrics (<http://tinyurl.com/2pcgss>) or Keirseay Temperment Sorter (<http://tinyurl.com/69hezr>)
- Compare your knowledge, skills, and abilities to those identified in your job description or your ideal job.
- Review performance assessments and/or ask for feedback from your supervisor or colleagues.

Step 2 - ASSESS YOUR CURRENT POSITION

- Identify the job requirements and performance expectations of your current position.
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will enhance your ability to perform your current job.
- Identify changes occurring in your work environment, (clients, programs, services, technology, etc.) and assess the impact on your position.

Based on your answers in Steps 1 and 2, answer the following questions:

- What goals do you want to achieve in your career?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities can you learn?
- Which development goals are mutually beneficial to you and your organization?
- What resources do you need to engage in the activities – time, motivation, assistance, funds?
- Are your goals short-term (1 year), medium-term (2 year) or long-term?

Write what you would like to achieve as goals. Select two or three goals to work on at a time. Set a time frame for accomplishing your goals.

Step 3 - IDENTIFY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Identify the best ways to achieve your development goals.

- What methods will you use?
- What resources will be required?

Step 4 - PUT YOUR PLAN IN ACTION

Once you have prepared a draft of your individual development plan:

- Review your plan with your supervisor for his or her input and approval.
- Start working on your plan.
- Evaluate your progress; make necessary adjustments.
- Celebrate your successes!



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