

## Darby Ranger District Sets Goal for Accident-Free Workplace

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell visited the Northern Region in May 2011 and spoke about his goal to make the Forest Service a zero-fatality organization. The Darby Ranger District of the Bitterroot National Forest accepted that goal and designed a program to move the district toward that mindset by setting an even higher goal of zero accidents.

The program focuses on maintaining open, honest and frequent communication about safety. Among the many reasons to maintain a safe workplace, perhaps the most important aspect recognized by the district employees is that everyone should safely return to their families at the end of the day.

To establish the program and to ensure all employees at the district office are committed toward the goal, the district wrote up a two-part "0" contract. The first part was the contract itself. The second part of the contract was an attachment for supervisors, which was actually signed first. Signing that portion of the contract provided the opportunity to emphasize that all employees need to feel comfortable about bringing an issue to the attention of a supervisor.

The contract was discussed with all the employees at the district, and everyone was willing to sign the contract.

After signing the contract, a reason card was issued to all employees. The card has bullets from the "0" contract on one side and employees place a person, people, or animal on the other side that will depend that employee to come home at the end of the day. Random checks to see if employees are carrying the card either earns a small reward, if the employee isn't carrying the card they earn a short informal safety chat with the district ranger.

Monday morning district safety briefings offer an opportunity to share close calls, reflect on potential incidents, and discuss how everyone can operate more safely. As employees leave the district office, a sign with consecutive accident free days offers one final reminder before heading out.

Victoria Christiansen, acting Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region, recently recognized the efforts by the district through one of the Regional Forester's Honor Awards for Creating Vital Regional Organizations.

This program epitomizes the type of work that needs to be done for us to achieve the Chief's vision of a zero-fatality organization, and it has people talking about safety and taking a hard look at the consequences of the alternative.

Another important aspect of the program is that it provides opportunities for the safety discussions to continue at their weekly meetings and celebrating milestones once the district surpasses set numbers of accident-free days.

The Honor Award for Creating Vital Regional Organizations was among five awards recently given by Christiansen. The Northern Region has established a series of special awards to recognize exceptional performance or outstanding contributions and accomplishments to improve the quality and efficiency of Forest Service administrative and resource programs.