



## One company's experience with COR™

Since COR™ began in Ontario, many firms have signed on for a variety of reasons. For some, it's a chance to build a stronger case for success when bidding for jobs. But for many others, it's an opportunity to improve their health and safety program and measure it against a recognized audit program. *IHSA.ca Magazine* spoke with Corporate EHS Manager Gino Squeo and EHS Supervisor Scott Maxwell of E.S. Fox Ltd. to learn more about that company's experience with COR™ and to find out what advice they would give to a firm just starting out.

### 1. Tell us a little bit about your company.

E.S. Fox Ltd. is a privately held, third-generation, family-owned company and one of the largest industrial and fabrication firms in eastern, western, and central Canada. For over seven decades now, we have been one of the Niagara Region's leading companies in the industrial, construction, fabrication, engineering, and HVAC industries.

We have more than 1,000 employees actively involved in major industrial, commercial, and institutional projects throughout the country. We have a proven record of documenting and implementing quality standards, and we continue to meet stringent safety, quality, and project control requirements on an ongoing basis. We are constantly embracing new technologies to ensure we do the best for the company, for our employees, and for our customers.

### 2. How long have you been involved in COR™?

We began in February 2012 by submitting our application to IHSA. We submitted our Internal Audit in September 2012. The External Audit was completed by November 2012, and we received our COR™ Certification on December 5, 2012.

### 3. Why did you decide to get involved with COR™?

We had already been through the ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 process. A large part of that is "continual improvement." After reviewing the COR™ process, we believed there would be great value in pursuing this certification.

We have witnessed not just the importance of COR™, but the mandatory requirement in other provinces by many companies and industries. It was our belief that we should be on the forefront here in Ontario. We wanted to be ready when large corporations or clients began to implement COR™ as a requirement to bid on work.

### 4. How difficult has the process been?

The process of COR™ can be time-consuming, depending on the nature of the company. We have seven branches in Ontario, which created some logistical planning. But it was made easier by attending the required courses (*COR™ Essentials*,

*Basic Auditing Principles*, and *COR™ Internal Auditor*). These courses really helped us understand the process.

Three things that we believe made this process easier internally were having

1. support from Senior Management
2. a growing safety culture
3. a strong health and safety management system already in place and functioning well.

## **5. So you're currently COR™ certified?**

Yes, we completed our annual audit and received our Letter of Good Standing on December 5, 2013.

## **6. What benefits has your company seen since you've been involved in COR™?**

We found that the COR™ Audit Tool keeps you honest. It helps identify the holes in your health and safety program. Then you work to close the gaps through a corrective action plan.

Also, the interview process creates an environment where workers can be honest, while feeling like they are part of building a better safety program. Interviews helped us recognize deficiencies in the way we communicate our health and safety program to front-line supervisors and workers.

Internally, we have witnessed an increase in our safety culture. Externally, in terms of our reputation in the industry, many of our large clients have expressed interest in our COR™ certification. They have applauded us for having COR™, asked us questions during bid presentations, and are considering adopting COR™ as a requirement for bidding in the future.

With the certification, we are now able to bid on projects that require COR™ as part of the bidding and pre-qualifying process. We would encourage other companies to get involved in the COR™ process.

We think it's important that the person spearheading this process be a key player in the company's Health and Safety Department. They should do some pre-planning on the front end and go through the audit tool a few times to get a feel for the layout. That will help when it comes time to perform the internal audit.

My advice is to make use of the expertise at IHSA when you come up against roadblocks. Keep an open mind because there will be bumps in the process. As you perform interviews and report honestly, it will reveal opportunities for improvement.

## **7. Do you see any issues around firm size? Is the process difficult to complete depending on your size?**

We don't believe so—it seems to be relative. We think it all depends on the resources you have and what safety means to your company.

We have 1,000 or more employees at any given time, but we are fortunate to have the resources and support from Senior Management to make safety a number-one priority.

The interview process requires that you interview a certain number of workers and supervisors, depending on your total number of employees.

## **8. Who was directly involved in the process at your company?**

Our Corporate Safety Manager, Safety Supervisor and of course E.S. Fox Ltd employees played a key role in the process.

## **9. What did you learn from the audit process?**

We learned that we have improvements to make within our health and safety program to reach a higher level.

One of the most important things we learned was that we had failed to communicate our objectives and targets to our workers in the field. Although we developed them, we did not formally communicate them and explain them in terms of where they came from and what we must do to achieve them.

We also learned that we are consistent across Ontario. When the audit showed we were doing something very well or when it pointed out a need for improvement, it was the same, whether we were in Thunder Bay, Niagara Falls, or Kingston.

Most of all, we think it confirmed that we are on the right path. We are headed in the right direction and COR™ has truly helped us along on our journey.

## **10. Did you get the assistance you needed from IHSA staff?**

Absolutely! The staff at IHSA was instrumental in getting us started on the right foot. They not only provided the training required to understand and to carry out the whole process, but the staff was always available to answer questions we had along the way.

We at E.S. Fox would especially like to thank Carlos Figueira, Rob Quigley, and Scott Needs at IHSA for all of the help and support we received.