FHM and The TradeWinds Island Resort
taking safety seriously

The TradeWinds Island Resort on the island of St. Pete Beach is actually two distinct beach resorts. TradeWinds Island Grand is the classic, AAA four-diamond, family-friendly resort, while Sandpiper Hotel and Suites is the more intimate TradeWinds resort with leisurely days of relaxation and tranquility. Regardless of which property the visitor selects, TradeWinds offers the ideal Florida beach vacation ... complete in its offerings, relaxed in its attitude, and attentive in its approach.

As an FHM Safe Workplace Award winner, TradeWinds has demonstrated the same attentive approach to safety management. With 700+ employees who speak 15 languages, keeping the company’s workplace safe is a full time endeavor and quite a challenge. Yet, it’s a challenge the TradeWinds team – Keith Overton, General Manager, Mike Lumpkin, Safety Director, Rhonda Buring Employment and Benefits Manager, Dennis Price FHM Senior Loss Control Consultant, Rich Ochin FHM Senior Account Manager, and Wes Brandt, and John DeLutrie of Gallagher Real Estate & Hospitality Services – has met with stunning results. In the past 2 years the company has seen its workplace accidents drop from 61 to 25. And during the first quarter of 2007 the company experienced only 2 minor accidents.

A Team Approach to Safety

What’s the secret? According to General Manager Keith Overton it’s a complete approach that combines strong programs, good communication and a high level of attention to detail. “We basically changed our culture” Overton says. “Everything we do includes a safety component now. And, we have a great team of professionals focusing on safety.”

Mike Lumpkin, TradeWinds’ Safety Director can’t talk enough about the company’s safety programs and the positive effects of good communication. “We have four approaches to safety. We establish safety goals for each department and monitor them regularly. We recognize good safety performance with individual awards and departmental awards. We have a Drug Free Workplace and Post-Injury Drug Testing program.” The fourth and newest focus is a safety training center in which Lumpkin and others will do small group sessions on a continuous basis.

Recognition of good safety performance is an important aspect of TradeWinds efforts according to Lumpkin. “In 2006 I distributed 553 gift cards to employees to recognize good safety performance; my goal for 2007 is to distribute 619 cards!” he says.

Strong communication with employees – regardless of the language they speak – is a fifth TradeWinds strategy that pays off in many ways. “When you spend time talking with employees, you have the opportunity to understand them better and help them understand why safety is so important” Lumpkin says. Employees know when they see Mike Lumpkin they can expect to be asked at least two questions “How are you?” and “What’s the Safety Basic of the day?” The Safety Basic program is one of several ways TradeWinds uses communication to keep safety on people’s minds. Based on a Safety Basic card that has 30 safety tips – one for every day of the month – the program encourages employees to read the tip of the day and talk about it with each other. “It’s a simple way to reinforce the fact that safety should be a daily focus” says Lumpkin.
Another TradeWinds team member, Rhonda Buring plays an important role in TradeWinds’ successful safety management. Through her efforts at following up on every claim, paying attention to all the details and staying on top of all the issues, TradeWinds has seen its claims costs drop from $649,000 to $100,000 in the last two years. The company hopes to stay on track so in the next few years claims costs could be as low as $20,000! “The best dollar you have is the one you don’t have to spend on workers’ compensation claims” say Overton and Lumpkin.

TradeWinds’ managers meet weekly to review employee injuries and goals and formulate strategies to keep their program on its successful track. In the meeting held on June 27th they celebrated 60 days as a corporation without an injury requiring medical attention. That represents a major milestone for a company with 700+ employees working three shifts a day and is an outstanding example of the creation of a successful corporate safety culture. This variety of safety programs, continuous communication about safety, and strong claims management means TradeWinds is taking a comprehensive approach to safety management... but there’s more.

**Taking Safety Seriously**

“One of the great things about TradeWinds is they not only have strong safety programs, they hold their managers accountable for good safety results” says Rich Ochin, FHM Account Manager. “Because the effective mitigation of injuries and costs determines a significant percentage of managers' bonuses, the idea of controlling workers' compensation costs for the overall benefit of the corporation as well as themselves is very clear” he adds.

“TradeWinds’ managers have annual targets for financial performance and can earn nice annual bonuses based on safety performance” Lumpkin states. In addition to their normal departmental budget, every manager has a budgeted workers' compensation year end goal based on the potential for injury in their department. Managers must ensure their departments stay within that budgeted goal in order to be eligible for bonus compensation at the end of the year. Each department manager works closely with Mike Lumpkin to control losses and improve safety awareness. Lumpkin is quick to inform them of injuries or situations that may eliminate them from the bonus pool.

Ochin credits this accountability for the dramatic turnaround in TradeWinds’ performance over the past two years. “They had a rough year in 2005. 2006 showed good improvement and they are on track for a great year in 2007” says Ochin. “Their performance has been outstanding and has benefited them in many ways” Ochin goes on to say “As a matter of fact, in 2006 TradeWinds received one of the largest dividend checks FHM has ever written.”

“FHM has helped us greatly in our safety efforts” Overton says “They are specialists in our industry – they know our business, understand our challenges and are always ready to help us no matter what the issue.” Dennis Price, FHM Senior Loss Control Consultant, works closely with Mike Lumpkin to ensure the company is doing all it can to create and maintain a safe workplace. “We asked them to train their employees, be on the lookout for safety concerns, hire a full time Safety Director and pay attention to the details” Price says “They’ve done all those things and are seeing the benefits daily.” Price goes on to say “You can feel the difference at TradeWinds – in the staff, in the workplace and in the results – it’s great to see them doing so well.”

Bill Bond, President of FHM sums up the TradeWinds experience this way “TradeWinds’ management expressed a strong desire to turn its safety program around. They indicated they were willing to do whatever it took to create and maintain a safe workplace for their employees and to make sure they could keep their promise to visitors that they could ‘just let go.’ This is a true success story and proof positive that when you pay attention to safety . . . it pays off!”