

# Top job partners: awareness and safety

**I**t's an exciting job experience at KRWA, to work as an inspector and technical assistant, to help communities achieve success with their KAN STEP projects. KAN STEP rewards are great for both the community and for team members, in job satisfaction. It's great to be able to help others accomplish their goals.

As in every job, job safety needs to be a main concern. Recently, KRWA's insurance underwriters reviewed programs operated by KRWA. The review involved KRWA's documentation of staff time spent on each work area.

Shane Holthaus  
KAN STEP Tech

Thanks to your Association's documentation processes, KRWA was able to demonstrate such things as the percentage of time spent driving to job sites vs. time on project, meeting with agencies or doing paper work.



## Safety first

During discussions with insurance underwriters, KRWA was able to report zero accidents on KAN STEP projects. That's pretty remarkable given the variety and complexity of work accomplished on the numerous projects. KRWA not only preaches safety on KAN STEP projects but conducts safety training as well. It's not a game. It's serious business.

Paying attention or not paying attention on any job

site can make or break a project—or even your head. The many issues needing attention both before and during any KAN STEP

than just showing up on the job with a hammer and a nail bag. I am not trying to intimidate anyone or give an idea that I know better. There

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building, water or wastewater system construction include: design, budget, safety, personnel, equipment, material, weather, and even worker morale. The point needing to be made is that there's more to construction

is an old saying and I believe it will always hold true, "We don't plan to fail, we fail to plan."

During the two years I have worked for KRWA on KAN STEP projects, I have gotten to know hundreds of



*Basic safety at the worksite can be as simple as a quick demonstration and a reminder of what the consequences can mean. The picture on the left shows the correct way to saw a board, supported safely. The right picture shows a saw cut supported by a body part that may soon be on the way to the emergency room. And emergency rooms are not always close by. These reminders and demonstrations are necessary to keep safety awareness at a high level that allows the workplace to be a great experience for everyone.*

people. No two communities have been the same, each having an entirely different pool of volunteers to draw from. The KAN STEP projects are very rewarding and worthwhile with experiences that volunteers come away with often being a renaissance of sorts – it's something that rekindles pride in their communities. The pace and planning of a commercial job is a process that few people experience in a lifetime. The architectural plans used are more than just a design but a template for what is supposed to happen next. But, construction also has to be planned knowing that there are different techniques to accomplishing the same task.

Communication is the number one tool for a successful project. George may be holding the other end of that 2 x 8; but make sure there's communication as you hoist it overhead for the header. Pete might be pushing a 40-foot section of six-inch PVC pipeline into the other; but people need to know that PVC pipe will cut off fingers if they are between the joints.

### Sparkplugs set the tone

Project leaders in KAN STEP programs are referred to as "sparkplugs." That's really what they are. Every community has some. They may be naturals or more subdued but they are the people willing to take the lead, show responsibility and make sure things happen. They are more than volunteers. KAN STEP

## Typical safety topics for KAN STEP projects

One of the first benefits that KRWA provides to help KAN STEP projects is to conduct a meeting with local volunteers to review safety issues. It's a short course for sure but critically important. The discussion is intended to remind people of some of the basic concerns that everyone must watch out for to help ensure their and their fellow volunteers' safety on the project.



### Safety-related topics and questions:

- Do we have to wear hard hats?  
**Answer:** Yes, but only when there is overhead work.
- Do we have to comply with OSHA regulations?  
**Answer:** Yes, use common sense; don't rush; ask for help from a co-worker when help is needed.
- Do we really need someone to monitor safety?  
**Answer:** Yes. Example: when working on a roof someone should be watching the work to make sure a worker doesn't unknowingly get too close to a dangerous situation like falling over the edge.
- Do people really cause 98% of all accidents on the job?  
**Answer:** Yes. Human error and bad judgment play huge roles in accidents.

sparkplugs are looked to for guidance and leadership. From developing a work schedule to helping boost spirits of people when another 50 yards of concrete is on tap—the sparkplugs not only help head a project in the right direction but they also help keep the workers' heads in the game.

There is no substitute for practicing good safety, whether it's working with KAN STEP or

someone repairing a chlorinator or helping set a fire hydrant. Pay attention to co-workers; drive defensively and don't put fingers between the pipes when they are coming together. Paying attention and due diligence go a long way to preventing accidents. To date, volunteers on KAN STEP projects have a stellar record in that regard. We're working to keep it that way.

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