

PLAYFUL AND SERIOUS NOTE TO OUR SAFETY: CIRQUE BOSKALI



To give an extra boost to the NINA safety program, Boskalis Nederland recently organized a series of special meetings in a circus tent, complete with party lights and circus music. At four locations, around a thousand colleagues and regular contract staff participated in an impressive and thought-provoking program with the theme *We make time for safety*.

01 RINGMASTER MARCEL WITTE

02 PETER VAN DER LINDE, DIRECTOR BOSKALIS NEDERLAND

'We have been looking for a way to put NINA in the spotlight in recent years,' says Marcel Witte, SHE-Q manager at Boskalis Nederland (BKN). 'While safety was still a priority at BKN, we noticed a drop in the explicit attention paid to NINA in our projects and throughout the organization. We hadn't been able to organize events because of the pandemic but, since some restrictions were lifted last summer, we came up with the plan of visiting various projects with a traveling circus. The idea is actually a sequel to the way we introduced NINA more than a decade ago. At that time, we traveled from project to project on a converted sand carrier to explain the essence and importance of NINA to our BKN colleagues.'

MEMORABLE EVENT

'The idea was that choosing an unusual setting would make it a memorable event. After all, it's not every day you're invited to visit a circus at work, with the aim of deliberately taking time to think about safety and discuss it with each other. The visitors found the event very positive and worthwhile. We also wanted to give as many colleagues as

possible the opportunity to meet again in person,' says Peter van der Linde, director of BKN. 'That's why we decided to travel around the Netherlands to visit our colleagues on a number of large project sites, just as we did ten years ago.' The circus tent was set up at four locations: Amsterdam, Beuningen, Katwijk and finally the head office in Papendrecht. There were nineteen performances in all, with fifty to sixty visitors each time.

DAREDEVIL FEATS

The audience was treated to a varied program in a festive circus setting. Marcel welcomed them in an authentic ringmaster's outfit and announced the first circus act: two actors entered the ring and played the role of acrobats on the trapeze. Before their act, they discussed the hazards of the daredevil feats they were about to perform, including working without a safety net. While stunts like these aren't part of our work at Boskalis, the performance playfully highlighted the hazards that sometimes arise on projects, particularly as visitors were actively encouraged to talk about the risks and

SAFETY TALK



potential hazards they encounter in their daily work.

TALK TO EACH OTHER

'The next part of the program was a monologue delivered by an actress. She literally stepped into the shoes of a widow, describing how she had lost her husband in an accident on a construction site,' says Marcel. 'It's a true story, although it didn't happen at BKN. The widow was convinced the accident could have been prevented and asked the audience to think about the circumstances leading up to it. The conclusion is that it isn't enough to feel responsible for your colleagues: you must intervene and act immediately if something dangerous happens. That's what NINA is all about: if you see that something unsafe is about to happen, talk to each other and make sure it is done safely.'

REPORT SHORTCOMINGS

'Reporting *near misses* should also become a matter of course,' he continues. 'If something goes wrong due to human error, it might seem rude to approach a colleague about it. And of course, if you do something wrong, you would rather keep it to yourself. But that doesn't help us at all as a company. The NINA philosophy actually means we don't blame each other for a mistake: we accept the fact that everybody can get something wrong sometimes. Reporting mistakes is crucial for

all of us at Boskalis, because we can learn from them. We will continue encouraging our colleagues to speak up about any doubts they may have about barriers, fencing or other safety measures. We can only make improvements if shortcomings like these are reported.'

DISCUSSION WITH THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Following the powerful monologue by the 'widow', the acrobats gave a playful introduction to a discussion of the importance of the Safety Hazard Observation Card (SHOC) and YES scan (check Yourself, your Equipment and your Surroundings). But the main act was yet to come: members of the BKN management team entered the arena and began an open-hearted discussion with the visitors. 'They put the theme *We make time for safety* into practice during an in-depth discussion with the audience. They explained their vision for safety and the role of NINA, and responded to questions and remarks,' says Marcel. 'Numerous topics came up during these sessions. Many of them were recorded so that practical steps to improve safety could be taken later. One important message is that we need to keep taking safety seriously. This means approaching one another about potentially unsafe situations, at every level of the organization, while also recording *near misses* and learning from them. The visitors were reminded that everyone can

discuss their questions or doubts directly with their manager. This direct exchange had a major impact on everyone. Many of the colleagues I spoke to said they found it very worthwhile.'

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