



Thanks to receiving CPR and First Aid training, five Consumers Energy natural gas workers stayed calm under pressure during chaotic situations to save lives while on the job.

Saving Lives While on the Job

People are alive and well today thanks to comprehensive safety training completed by natural gas workers at Consumers Energy.

Five of the company's employees working on the replacement of natural gas distribution lines were involved in heroic efforts to save others while on the job. Each employee credited safety training for keeping them calm and staying focused during a potentially deadly event.

Those recent life-saving actions are rooted in the company's decade-long re-commitment to personal and public safety.

In 2008, Consumers Energy had 355 recordable incidents with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The company started a safety culture journey to reduce on-the-job injuries and ensure everyone went home safe.

Through the years, efforts included:

- Partnering with the Michigan State Utility Workers Council (MSUWC) to assign union safety representatives to operations organizations
- Creating local grassroots Safety Culture teams
- Expanding safety training courses and outreach to all employees
- Eliminating distractions
- Enhancing after-action reviews
- Introducing onsite safety tailboards and a Public Safety Good Catch program

That hard work is paying off; 2017 marked the third consecutive year of record-breaking safety performance as the company ended with 65 OSHA recordable incidents.

What began as an effort to send employees home safely has become a culture to step in when a Michigan neighbor needs help.

Jason Potter, a pipeline excavator, was one of five employees who recently assisted at a scene. He won a national award for his life-saving efforts and was named the honorary starter at the Consumers Energy 400 at Michigan International Speedway in August.

Jason Potter

Potter was commuting to his Birch Run, Mich., work location via Interstate 75 during the summer of 2017 when he witnessed a car accident.

Potter rushed to the crashed vehicle that had come to rest on the driver's side door. He was horrified to see blood; a result of the driver's arm being pinned between the vehicle's roof and the ground.

"My first thought was to get her out of there because this car is going to catch on fire," Potter said. "Luckily another guy stopped, and we had to pick up the vehicle and pry the door open to get her arm out from underneath."

The unconscious woman was pulled from the car. Potter tore off his shirt and used it as a tourniquet along with using his hands to squeeze the artery under the woman's arm to help stop the severe bleeding while another motorist called 9-1-1.

"Two months earlier we went through a refresher in CPR training. So it was fresh in my mind, and my instincts took over."

A Michigan State Trooper took a statement from Potter and told him he did a great job.

"It was the right thing to do," Potter said. "I don't see how somebody wouldn't stop. It had to be done. Somebody needed help."

Dan T. Brown

In the summer of 2017, Brown was returning to his vehicle from an appointment.

He realized the car parked next to him was engulfed in flames and there was somebody in the driver's seat.

He pounded on the window. No answer. He then opened the door and found the woman unconscious. He tried to shake her, and she responded incoherently. He then grabbed her in a bear hug and moved her to a safe distance.

Security from a building nearby took command of the situation and thanked Brown for his quick action.

"It's important to have First Aid skills," said Brown, a directional bore operator. "You never know when a loved one, a co-worker or even a complete stranger will need your help."

James Stratton

In his 200,000 plus miles in travel on company time, Stratton has seen his share of accidents. But it was well after they had happened and the police and fire departments had responded.

"Every time I drove by, I wondered if I would be up for the challenge to help somebody if I was first on the scene," said Stratton, a journeyman pipeline welder.

On a fall day in 2017, that day came. He was heading to a work assignment in Alma when he came upon an SUV in a Shiawassee County ditch.

He saw a woman with a few scrapes on her face yelling frantically and waving her arms. Her young daughter was stuck in her car seat.

"In the 20 seconds it took me to walk to her vehicle, I was afraid of what I might find," he said. "But then I heard her daughter crying, and I was relieved."

Stratton went in through the driver's side door, which was opened when the mother escaped. The vehicle was filling with smoke, and he shut off the still running car.

He saw the two-year old dangling from her car seat. After some considerable effort, he was able to free her and made his way out of the ditch. He reunited the two. Stratton said neither was severely hurt.

Stratton said the woman told him she was reaching for something that caused her vehicle to spin out of control. He added the incident caused him to be even more dedicated to safety.

"You have to be in the moment when you drive," he said.

Charles Hale and Assaph "Ace" Castle

Some days Hale and Castle questioned the redundancy of a safety tailboard, one of the company's required practices, which helps identify work hazards – before a routine job.

But after a life-threatening incident – they don't question them anymore.

In the summer of 2017, the two were northbound on Dort Highway when they noticed something was in the middle of the road.

"At first we thought it was an animal because people weren't stopping and just driving around it," said Castle, a gas lines equipment operator. "The closer we got, we realized it was a man laying in the turning lane and traffic lane."

Hale, a gas lines equipment operator, immediately turned on the flashers and parked the van diagonally on the road blocking both lanes. They also used cones to direct traffic.

"We knew exactly what we needed to do while staying calm," Castle said. "I thought later on, how were we able to do it? It was 100 percent because of the tailboard we do each day."

Hale agreed, "The tailboard gave us the structure we needed in a tough situation. We often quiz each other about 'what if' scenarios."

Hale placed the kneeling pad under the man's head and protected him from further injury.

After a few minutes, a woman approached the two, thanked them and said the victim was her brother and he suffered from seizures.

Hale said a career in the military and emergency services helped prepare him for any crisis – and the company's annual refresher training keeps him current.

"If you need to do something – you do it," said Castle. "Don't wait for somebody else because that somebody may never step up."