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New Orleans Iron Works owners, Denise and Brent Buford, in front of one of their current projects, the construction of a 110' pedestrian bridge for the New Orleans Children's Hospital.

NEW ORLEANS IRON WORKS' OWNERS BELIEVE IN A HANDS-ON APPROACH AND A STRONG WORK ETHIC FOR THEIR COMPANY CULTURE

For New Orleans Iron Works, doing great work isn't just about building buildings, it's about building a safe working environment for every employee on the jobsite. Now in their 20th year, New Orleans Iron Works has contributed to the fabrication and erection of structural steel on some of the most specialized and notable projects in the Greater New Orleans area.

Owners Denise and Brent Buford have decades of experience in the steel industry, dating back years before starting New Orleans Iron Works. Denise is the president of the company and oversees all business, financial, and contractual aspects, along with managing their insurance needs. Brent manages the fabrication, scheduling, and on-site erection of the projects.

Both owners are extremely involved and have built a hands-on culture that is instilled in all their employees. Their impressive work ethic, turn-key capabilities, impeccable safety record, and—above all—their strong relationships with businesses in New Orleans has allowed the company to grow each year in size and with unique projects.

BUSINESS WITH A FOCUS ON A HANDS-ON CULTURE

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Operations manager, Judson McLeod, works alongside the Bufords in the day-to-day activities. McLeod, a veteran of the construction contracting industry with 25 years of general contracting experience, has been with the company for seven years. In his time as operations manager, the company became certified by the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) for both the fabrication and erection sides of its business, proving the company's commitment to quality and safety.

"That certification signifies that you have the quality and safety programs in place needed to meet the very high standard dictated by AISC," said McLeod. With the certification, the business was able to secure a number of high-profile projects in New Orleans.

The company employs over 75 full-time workers. On any given day, the New Orleans Iron Works team may have 20 on-going projects throughout Greater New Orleans and Baton Rouge. In the past two decades, the company has built an impressive portfolio of key city buildings including renovations of the Hyatt Regency and the construction of the New Orleans East Hospital, as well as the construction of the Patrick F. Taylor Hall at the LSU College of Engineering in Baton Rouge. They are currently working on the North Terminal at the Louis Armstrong International Airport and the New Orleans Children's Hospital expansion and renovation, which includes a 110' pedestrian bridge.

Each project is unique, but they all require the same level of due diligence from all parties involved. Every phase



New Orleans Iron Works operations manager, Judson McLeod, at the Louis Armstrong International airport's North Terminal job site in New Orleans.

of a project features different risks, from the manufacturing and fabrication to the transportation of steel to the job site, and ultimately the erection. Safety is imperative for each phase and McLeod is a key enforcer of best safety practices—a responsibility he takes very seriously.

"Our culture is built on a foundation of safety and we perform ongoing quarterly testing to ensure they remain safe," said McLeod. In addition to these training sessions, supervisors hold job hazard analysis meetings to review the upcoming day's activities and ensure all workers are aware of the correct safety procedures associated with each job. When hiring new employees, McLeod oversees mentorships and supervision until all new hires fully understand the job at hand.

According to McLeod, safety really starts with the Bufords. "They know the hazards associated with handling structural steel. You have to train for it and have an instilled protocol for safety." The company has a safety director who is dispatched immediately to any site that a near miss occurs to assess the situation and find a solution.

Management also meets frequently to review safety protocols, any near misses, and any concerns raised by workers.

"We've been with LUBA since the beginning, and they stand by us and work with us as needed to improve our safety programs."

For McLeod, safety comes down to experience, and he thinks that New Orleans Iron Works and its employees have that as a competitive advantage. "The people working with us have been here for many years, and they have a level of knowledge that allows them to work around the challenges of our work sites."

The company also utilizes the Loss Control team at LUBA. McLeod and other managers meet with LUBA every three to six months to walk through all work sites and check for any potential safety risk. McLeod really appreciates having a third set of eyes on the safety of his workers. "We've been with LUBA since the beginning, and they stand

by us and work with us as needed to improve our safety programs."

John Hadden Jr., New Orleans Iron Works' insurance agent at Eagan Insurance Agency, has nothing but praise for his client's long-term safety success. "They are a 'grade A' safety act over there," said Hadden. He also noted the company takes on unique projects and still keeps their employees safe. For example, the New Orleans airport and the children's hospital are far from normal buildings. They have close quarter access requirements, non-standard hoisting requirements, and specialty pieces. "It's been incredible watching them work on these projects. They're leaving landmarks behind," said Hadden. 



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As a LUBA policyholder, you've come to expect workers' comp you can depend on. What does that mean?



REAL PEOPLE – when a claim occurs you want immediate assistance, not someone's voicemail.



KEEPING YOUR EMPLOYEES OPERATING SAFELY – whether your business has experienced claims or not, it never hurts to have a second pair of eyes when it comes to loss prevention.



DIVIDENDS – qualifying accounts receive money back each year.