KEEPING IBM CANADA CENTRES RUNNING SAFELY

NO TIME FOR DOWNTIME

A big data centre can use as much electricity as a small town and it's all housed under a single roof. At IBM Canada all that data (and all that power) is big business, so it's critical that its facilities are properly organized, properly wired and properly inspected so the facility stays up and running. The intricate and specialized cabling and power supply maintenance needs of a data centre can be a challenge, however, IBM has a secret weapon — the Electrical Safety Authority's (ESA's) Continuous Safety Services (CSS) program.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS

Many CSS customers place great value on the cost savings and reduction in administrative work that can come as benefits of the program. Colin Gray, Critical Environment Manager/Senior Technical Lead Canada at IBM Canada Ltd., believes the true value of the program is having a partner. With a CSS Inspector providing expert electrical review of a variety of IBM initiatives, Gray notes that there is another set of eyes that can examine the electrical needs of the facility as a whole, instead of focusing narrowly on one specific project.

Over the years, Gray estimates that working with the CSS Inspector has saved IBM Canada thousands of dollars since they use the Inspector strategically to review plans and work throughout the project instead of just at the end. In particular, Gray cites the Inspector's ability to identify things that may have been overlooked in design. Project designs may be limited in scope, whereas the Inspector understands the intricacies of the entire facility and has at times flagged potential issues that could cost money, or worse, affect performance.

CONTINUOUS SAFETY SERVICES (CSS)

CSS offers customers a full range of customized services designed to help maximize electrical safety in facilities, and supports businesses in Ontario in complying with the requirements of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code (Code). Rather than taking out a separate permit for each electrical job, CSS clients log all electrical work conducted and CSS Inspectors review that work on an audited basis. This streamlines the electrical review process. CSS clients also benefit from information and guidance on electrical safety and Code issues from a dedicated electrical inspector backed by a team of technical experts.

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GETTING PARTNERS UP AND RUNNING

When IBM Canada's $90 million data centre was built in Barrie, Ontario the company worked closely with its CSS Inspector to ensure the facility would run smoothly on day one and beyond. Prior to the facility becoming active, IBM began a CSS contract and made use of it by bringing the Inspector to the facility before the power was even turned on. They had hoped that doing so would help prevent any costly delays at the back-end of the process. Sure enough, it did.

Gray noted that when the CSS Inspector toured the facility, he was able to walk through the project with wiring inspectors and helped with design omissions in a way that eased the transition from construction to operation.

ANOTHER LINE OF DEFENCE

IBM Canada's business depends on a reliable source of power, which is why so many backups and safety mechanisms are installed in its data facilities. When your business is on the line, you don't want to add undue risk to the system. By participating in the CSS program, IBM is adding an additional line of defence to ensure its facilities remain up and running for its customers.

"He was worth a million bucks!"

Electrical Safety Authority