

Lynden Tribune

State's boiler inspectors come to Berthusen for some lively training

By Calvin Bratt
Lynden Tribune



With clipboards in hand, state boiler and pressure vessel inspectors for state Labor and Industries listen Monday to Brian Dykstra explain and show how a 1916 Case steam engine at Berthusen Park works. (Calvin Bratt/Lynden Tribune)

14 inspectors were able to try their hand driving a steam engine

LYNDEN — The state people who test and inspect boilers for a living got a chance to actually operate a big steam engine on Monday.

They came to Berthusen Park and listened to Brian Dykstra talk about all the valves and whistles of the restored 50-horsepower 1916 Case steam engine of the Puget Sound Antique Tractor and Machinery Association.

Then, one by one, they climbed on board to ride it, safely with Dykstra at hand, and to pull the gears and handles that make it go.

“There’s so many things to keep in mind at once, and it’s all mechanical,” said Bruce Weech after he was the first to try his hand. A former fireman who drove 100-foot ladder trucks in Seattle, Weech is now the supervisor of boiler and pressure vessel oversight for the Department of Labor and Industries.

With clipboards and taking notes, the inspectors were learning about big old steam engines from a good source: Brian Dykstra represents a third generation of the club based at Berthusen for 47 years now.

Looking on was Howard Nunnikhoven, who is currently president of the antique farm equipment restorers group.

It is quite significant that these state inspectors — without whose say-so the annual summer steam show cannot open — chose to come up to the Lynden grounds to see highly functioning large-scale steam apparatus and do some training.

Nearby was also a Rumely steam engine for farm use, and across the exhibit field is the big 150-horsepower 1910 Corliss steam engine with a 14-foot flywheel that is the crown piece of steam generation on site and would have powered a whole lumber mill in its day.

The Case was given to the club by collector Ted Spoelstra, of Forks, Washington, some years ago and was shown off in its full restored beauty and operation at the 2016 show.

The boiler program of Labor and Industries insures public safety through inspections and operating permits for more than 115,000 boilers and unfired pressure vessels throughout the state, according to the agency website.