Which 280 Seconds?

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By ANNA WELLS, Managing Editor, *Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation* (*IMPO* [1])

This past November, I attended a trade show in San Antonio where the keynote speaker was airplane captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger III. Captain Sullenberger’s name gained wide recognition, as many of you recall, in May of 2010 when he and a co-pilot successfully landed US Airways Flight 1549 in New York’s Hudson River, saving 155 lives after ducks flew into both the plane’s engines.

Now a public speaker and airline safety advocate, Sully kept me and the rest of his audience at rapt attention as he described the events leading up to this heroic, unusual event. While the details were stunning (some even gave me goose bumps), the one thing I remember most from the speech was this one phrase, uttered as Sully described how training, instinct and attention to detail in every instance dictated the way he reacted to this event:

“I didn’t know upon which 280 seconds my entire career would be judged.”

I take this to mean that we ought to focus our efforts on doing everything well, every time, as we never know when cutting corners could mean life or death.

Still, many of us aren’t dealt this hand — the one where we are judged on a public stage on how well we do our jobs. Most of us, in fact, go to work each day and perform our own small miracles and we’re lucky if anyone — even those in our direct vicinity — notices at all.

It’s interesting how these small day-to-day events add up to a big result. As manufacturing personnel, each maintenance task we perform, on a commensurate scale, is the difference between a plant operating efficiently or not, and therefore keeping people employed or not. It also can mean the difference between a

company's associates getting home safely each day … or not. There's a lot on the line, but it's rare that the spotlight shines on our industry and its everyday heroes.

It's with this in mind that *Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation* (*IMPO*) magazine and Atlas Copco Compressors are co-sponsoring the launch of the 2012 Maintenance Professional of the Year Award.

In an effort to honor the hardworking men and women in our industry, we'd like to ask *IMPO* readers to nominate a maintenance professional within their facility who exhibits best practices on a daily basis, including comprehensive skill levels, attention to safety, leadership skills and work ethic. We'll select three winners and profile them in the July issue. The first place winner will win a comprehensive prize package including a $500 Visa gift card, an iPad, a 283-piece tool chest, work boots, a Jawbone Bluetooth Speaker and official Atlas Copco work gear. Second and third place winners will receive a $200 Visa gift card, a 283-piece tool chest, work boots, a Jawboone Bluetooth Speaker and official Atlas Copco work gear.

It's not just those of us who make emergency water landings in an ice cold January river that deserve credit for a job well-done. According to Paul Humphreys, Atlas Copco's vice president of communications and branding, the company is committed to promoting strong plant maintenance programs, especially as the job pressures increase for these hardworking folks.

"We've seen many instances of deferring maintenance due to the challenging economic conditions," says Humphreys. "Companies that have made these tough decisions are placing a great strain on their maintenance professionals, who are having to manage the associated risks of deferred maintenance, while ensuring the facility remains running at 100 percent efficiency. That's why maintenance professionals are worthy of our praise and respect even more now than ever before."

Humphreys has it right. And Sully, well … he has it really right. If you work alongside someone whose career thus far should be applauded (no matter which 280 seconds of it you checked), then the 2012 Maintenance Professional of the Year Award is a great way to show them you noticed their hard work and dedication. It's when we encourage people to be great that they truly excel, whether it's with an airplane control panel at their fingertips, or a socket wrench in their hands.

Join us in recognizing the top maintenance professionals in our industry. To nominate your facility's maintenance professional, please visit www.research.net/s/maintpro *[2].*

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