



Opotiki factory expansion

Rawiri Wright

A boot factory in Opotiki is looking for more staff because of increased export orders from Pacific customers.

New Zealand Safety Footwear started in 1979 with three machine operators and a manager and today they employ twenty seven staff.

The factory makes safety footwear and exports to Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa as well as supplying the domestic market.

Factory manageress, Mrs Elaine Kellie says an average two hundred pairs of boots are made each day but production will have to be boosted to handle increased orders.

She says at least three more staff need to be taken on.

The factory was set up to provide work for the unemployed in Opotiki under the umbrella of the Whakatohea Trust. Most of the staff are from the

Whakatohea tribe and the trust board leases the factory to New Zealand Safety Footwear.

Mrs Kellie says that the staff work on a bonus system. Each of the five departments, from cutting to finishing, relies on one another to maintain production and ensure bonuses.

"We've just finished a 900 pair order and only five pairs didn't make the grade."

She says staff work as a family and because of this, morale is high. In fact, the family atmosphere has helped one employee who suffered brain damage because of a car accident.

Mrs Kellie says Karena Tai came back to work and he has made amazing progress.

"It's because he's been treated as one of the boys."

