

Talking Points for Paula White
VPP Workshop for Airline Industry Alliance
Atlanta, GA June 4, 2003
10:45 – 11:00 am

- Good morning. I am delighted to join you for this daylong look at OSHA's Voluntary Protection Programs.
- The March 2002 VPP approval of Delta's Technical Operations Base Maintenance here in Atlanta was a groundbreaking event. Delta can be proud, as we in OSHA are, of its pioneering efforts to strengthen worker safety and health in the airline industry. By committing to VPP, Delta managers and workers are betting that labor-management-government cooperation, and the establishment of effective safety and health management systems, are feasible and worthwhile goals.
- I think that's a safe bet, given that the VPP process has a 20-year proven track record at saving lives and preventing workplace injuries and illnesses. Yes, VPP is a process, (not a flavor of the month program) that works for all worksites (small, large, union, non-union, public, and private sector). The VPP process works at a variety of industries also. In fact there are over 200 different industry types participating.
- VPP is not for every company, however. It is designed for companies and worksites with a culture that values the safety and health of their employees on equal footing with production, quality, and profits.
- Once the VPP process is adopted by a company, very few companies drop out. Also, the VPP compliments many other quality improvement programs such as ISO and Malcolm Baldrige.
- As the value of VPP becomes more widely understood within the airline industry, I'm looking forward to seeing other airlines, and additional Delta worksites, on VPP's roster of worksite excellence.

- Why pursue VPP? While some believe that the VPP requirements are too tough to meet, and require too much paperwork, most find that benefits far outweigh the effort.
- VPP participants are OSHA's advocates and role models, proving that safety and health add value to your business, to your workplace, and to your life.
- The value for business is clear: Focusing on safety and health management systems is the right thing to do; it saves money and adds value to the organization. Safety Pays: Since its inception in 1982, VPP sites have saved over a billion dollars, and on average, their injury and illness rates are 54% below the national averages for their industries.
- Safety and health add value to the workplace as well. VPP companies have shown that the benefits include increased productivity, higher quality, improved morale and reduced turnover.
- And clearly, safety and health add value to your life. Anyone who has had an on-the-job injury can tell you that getting hurt or sick is not just physically painful. On-the-job injuries and illnesses can significantly reduce income, increase stress and impact your family life. But at VPP sites, the chances of getting hurt are greatly reduced.
- In 2001, by having injury and illness rates roughly 54% below the national averages, VPP sites avoided approximately 6,000 lost workday cases. Think about it: That's 6,000 people who went home to their families healthy and unharmed!
- VPP companies are helping OSHA achieve its mission. Overall, there has been a 62% reduction in workplace fatalities and a 40% decline in injury and illness rates over the last 30 years. In addition, injuries and illnesses in 2001 were the lowest in 9 years! So all of our efforts are paying off.
- I am often asked...what is the key to VPP's success? I think a case could be made that VPP's extraordinary experience rests on a simple but radical concept: labor, management, and government can work

together with amazing results. Positive, lasting relationships are possible and are well worth the effort.

- It is this successful relationship with VPP that has paved the way to expand OSHA's menu of cooperative programs.
- In fact, improving voluntary programs and partnerships as well as expanding outreach, education and compliance assistance efforts through alliances are at the top of Assistant Secretary Henshaw's priority list.
- Because of this OSHA is building strategic partnerships, alliances, and new compliance assistance strategies to reach a broader range of industries and locales, as you can attest.
- To assist employers and employees in these new cooperative ventures, we are improving existing and developing new compliance assistance tools to help identify workplace hazards and develop systems of prevention and control.
- These include an improved web page and e-tools; availability of compliance assistance specialists in every area office and hosting our second annual compliance assistance conference in June of this year.
- VPP has an important role to play in this effort. So let's talk about what VPP has accomplished and what we need to do now.
- We are fast approaching the end of our yearlong celebration of VPP's 20th anniversary. We've taken the time to look back and see just how far we've come. VPP has grown from only 11 participants in 1982 to 951 current participants in both federal and state plan VPP.
- In addition, VPP participants cover 208 different industries and almost 600,000 employees.
- VPP will reach 1,000 participants within the next few months!

- But OSHA covers 7 million sites so VPP's 951 sites represent a tiny fraction of the whole, not even 1%, only 1/100th of 1%. We need many, many more sites turning onto the road to excellence.
- So OSHA challenges the airline industry: As part of our alliance, help us make a quantum leap from fewer than 1,000 participants to 8,000, and also expand the VPP into the airline industry.
- Many of you may have heard Assistant Secretary John Henshaw announce this vision. And I can tell you that if you convince even one company to strive for VPP, Mr. Henshaw will be grateful.
- Let me tell you about steps OSHA is taking to meet this VPP challenge and provide you with the tools you need to help us.
- We are committed to expanding the Special Government Employees (SGE) program. This is a unique program where OSHA trains personnel from approved VPP companies. They then volunteer to assist OSHA on VPP onsite evaluations of other VPP applicants or participants. This is a way that our VPP companies give back to us. Currently there are 306 trained SGEs nationally. We trained just over 100 new SGE's last year, and plan on doing the same this year.
- Tools are also available through the Voluntary Protection Programs' Participants' Association (VPPPA) including free mentoring, and other products, workshops, and conferences. In fact their national conference is being held in Washington, DC the week of September 12th. I encourage you to attend.
- We want to see more small businesses in VPP. We're nearing completion on a small business kit jointly developed by OSHA and the Association. We're almost ready to publish.
- We've greatly improved the VPP tools that are available to the public including a new VPP web page. From this web page you can download the new VPP Policies and Procedures Manual, Application Brochure, and Report Format.

- In addition, OSHA VPP Managers are available in every OSHA Regional Office. They are available to give VPP presentations to appropriate persons within your company to help sell the VPP idea.
- As we look at ways to expand VPP, we are exploring opportunities for an entry-level program to assist companies who want to be on the road to excellence but need extra help or a road map to get going. Perhaps some of you would be interested in piloting this new program. In addition we are exploring new strategies for corporations and construction.
- I am confident that through this alliance, we can spread the word throughout the airline industry: Positive labor-management-government relationships make a difference. We have seen how these relationships lead to safety and health excellence. We are saving lives, and preventing injuries and illnesses at across the nation.
- So please seriously consider VPP as a process to improve safety and health in your workplace. Become part of the VPP family and be recognized by OSHA for being a leader in safety and health. With VPP recognition comes prestige, a competitive advantage, opportunity to networking with the best, and an improved relationship with OSHA. Shouldn't the airline industry be able to take advantage of these benefits? I sure think so!
- Thank you for your commitment, your enthusiasm, your continual striving for excellence, and your model relationship with OSHA. I look forward to continuing to work with you through this alliance and expand VPP through out the airline industry.