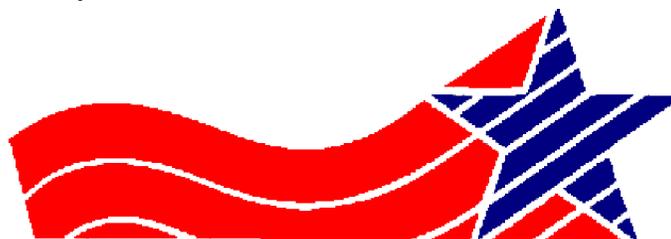


# Voluntary Protection Programs for Federal Worksites



U. S. Department of Labor

October 27, 1997

## VPP Opens Its Door to Federal Agencies

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is pleased to welcome applications for its Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) from Federal Agency sites with exemplary safety and health programs. The VPP, OSHA's premiere recognition program, emphasizes the importance of effective safety and health management systems in the prevention and control of workplace injuries and illnesses. At sites that qualify for VPP participation, employers and employees work together and in partnership with OSHA to provide a level of safety and health

protection that goes well beyond minimum OSHA standards.

Private sector participants have shown time and again that an investment in the VPP is a smart allocation of resources. VPP sites routinely experience fewer employee injuries/illnesses, lower workers' compensation costs, improved productivity, and improved employee morale. Now the benefits enjoyed by VPP worksites throughout the private sector are available to federal employers and employees.

## Federal VPP Criteria

Federal worksites applying to the VPP must meet the same requirements as private sector worksites, with a few exceptions. Please review the attached VPP Eligibility Checklist for a complete inventory of program requirements.

Highlights of the VPP for federal worksite applicants are:

★ Individual federal agency worksites are eligible to apply, not entire federal agencies. Applicants must be from a federal agency worksite subject to 29 CFR 1960.

★ Applicants must be in compliance with 29 CFR 1960, *Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs*, and all applicable OSHA

standards.

★ Applicants must track and submit their average injury and illness incidence rates (IIIR) and lost workday injury and illness rates (LWDIIR) for the most recent 3 calendar years. To qualify for STAR, the highest ranking within VPP, the rates must be below the current, comparable private sector average rates published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Applicants with rates above the BLS averages may qualify for MERIT.

★ Applicants must also submit their Federal Occupational Injury and Illness Log for the most recent 3 calendar years. Rates based on the Log will be considered in determining VPP eligibility.

★ Federal worksites approved to the VPP will not be targeted by OSHA for a programmed inspection.

## Overview of VPP

The Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) are designed to recognize and promote effective safety and health management. The cornerstone of the program is management, labor, and government (OSHA) cooperation.

VPP participants are a select group of facilities that have designed and implemented outstanding safety and

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health programs. STAR participants meet all VPP requirements. MERIT participants demonstrate the potential and willingness to achieve STAR status.

The VPP concept recognizes that compliance with OSHA standards alone can never fully achieve the objectives of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Good safety and health management programs that go beyond OSHA standards can protect workers more effectively. Management leadership and employee involvement are key to a sound program. Important features of the VPP include:

- ★ Management agrees to lead an effective program that meets established criteria.

- ★ Employees agree to participate in the program and work with management to assure a safe and healthful workplace. (Note: Unions must provide written assurances.)

- ★ OSHA initially verifies that the program meets the VPP criteria through an onsite review. OSHA then publicly recognizes the site's exemplary program and removes the site from targeted inspection lists.

- ★ Accidents, employee complaints, and chemical spills are handled according to established enforcement procedures and policies.

- ★ OSHA periodically reassesses the site's program to confirm that the site continues to meet VPP criteria.



## What Are The Benefits?

The following benefits have been cited by current VPP participants:

- ★ Fewer injuries. VPP participants generally experience from 60 to 80 percent fewer lost workday injuries than would be expected of an "average" site of the same size in their industries.

- ★ Improved employee motivation to work safely, leading to better quality and productivity.

- ★ Reduced workers' compensation costs.

- ★ Recognition in the community.

- ★ Improvement of programs that are already good, through the internal and external review that's part of the VPP application process.

## What About Paperwork?

Applicants often ask if applying for VPP recognition is just a paperwork exercise. The VPP application process is designed to be rigorous, to assure that only the best programs qualify. But VPP reviewers don't look for a single correct way to meet VPP requirements. They want to see a system that works for you! Some successful programs involve a lot of written documentation, while others do not. OSHA encourages applicants to use as much existing material as possible to document their program.

The VPP coordinator in your region can help you with questions about what is required.

## How Do I Apply?

A VPP Eligibility Checklist is attached. Use this checklist to see if your program meets the VPP criteria. If you qualify, submit a written application to OSHA. Application guidelines are available from any OSHA Regional Office. After OSHA has reviewed and approved your written application, the VPP Coordinator in your region will contact you to schedule an onsite review.

## Where Can I Get More Information?

The VPP Coordinator in your OSHA Regional Office can provide you with a VPP information kit and can help answer your questions.

OSHA recommends that you read two booklets before submitting your VPP application: *So You Want to Apply to VPP? Here Is How To Do It!* and *What To Expect During OSHA's Visit*.

You can get these booklets from your regional VPP Coordinator or download them -- and other useful information -- from OSHA's Internet site at <http://www.osha.gov>. VPP information begins at:

<http://www.osha.gov/oshprogs/vpp/osha2.html>.

If you have questions or comments you may also contact Ms. Cathy Oliver, VPP Chief, or Mr. Christopher Warren.

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# VPP Eligibility Checklist

The items listed below will help you determine your eligibility for the VPP. Remember, program elements must be in place for 1 year before you apply!

## *Specific Federal VPP Criteria*

- Compliance with 29 CFR 1960, *Basic Program Elements for Employee Occupational Safety and Health Programs*.
- Documentation supporting the notification of your DASHO of your intent to apply to the VPP.
- A copy of your Agency's current Annual Occupational Safety and Health Report to the Secretary of Labor. Any applicable elements should be noted and corrected.
- Injury and illness incidence rates (IIIR) and lost workday injury and illness rates (LWDIIR) for the most recent 3 calendar years. Include rates for contractors whose employees work 500 or more hours at your worksite in any one quarter.)
  - 1) To qualify for STAR, your rates must be below the current, comparable private sector BLS rates; for MERIT your rates may be above the BLS averages.
  - 2) In the rare event that equivalent private industry rates do not exist, rate comparisons will be made against similar government agency sites, or the government as a whole.
- A copy of your Federal Occupational Injury and Illness Log for the most recent 3 calendar years.

## *Management Leadership & Employee Involvement*

- A managerial commitment to worker safety and health protection?
- Top management's personal involvement?
- Safety and health concerns integrated into your overall planning cycle?
- Safety and health protection managed in the same way as your productivity and quality are managed?
- A written safety and health program appropriate for the size of your site and your equivalent industry that addresses all the elements in this checklist?
- A results-oriented safety and health policy?
- Clearly assigned safety and health responsibilities with documentation of accountability from top management to line supervisors?
- Adequate authority given to carry out assigned responsibilities?
- Necessary resources to meet responsibilities?
- Quality protection for all contract employees equal to that provided for your own employees?
- Meaningful employee involvement in activities that have a major effect on your safety and health program can be demonstrated?
- Annual safety and health program evaluations with written narrative reports, recommendations for program changes, action plans, and verification procedures?

### ***Worksite Analysis***

- A method such as comprehensive safety and industrial hygiene surveys to identify existing hazards in your workplace?
- A pre-use analysis procedure for new processes, materials, or equipment to determine hazards?
- Routine industrial hygiene monitoring of toxic substances and noise?
- Monthly self-inspections with written documentation and hazard correction tracking?
- Routine hazard analysis procedures such as JHAs, JSAs, BJAs, PHAs that result in improved work practices and/or training for employees?
- A written hazard reporting system enabling employees to pass on their observations or concerns to management without fear of reprisal?
- Accident investigations with written documentation?
- Method of documenting all identified hazards until they are controlled or eliminated?
- Analysis of trends in injury/illness experience and in hazards found, to identify patterns of problems and to implement program adjustments?

### ***Hazard Prevention And Control***

- Access to certified safety and health professionals?
- Engineering and administrative controls adequate for the hazards at the worksite?
- Written safety rules and practices that are understood and followed by all employees?
- A consistent disciplinary system applied to all employees (including supervisors and managers) who disregard the rules?
- Written rules for use and maintenance of

personal protective equipment?

- Written plans to cover emergency situations?
- Hazard correction tracking procedure?
- Onsite or nearby medical and emergency services?
- First aid and CPR-trained personnel available onsite during all shifts?
- Use of occupational health professionals in hazard analysis as appropriate?
- Documented ongoing monitoring and maintenance of workplace equipment?

### ***Safety And Health Training***

- Manager, supervisor, and employee training with emphasis on safety and health responsibilities?
- Training in the use and maintenance of personal protective equipment?
- Emergency preparedness drills, including annual evacuations?
- Documentation of all training received, including assessment procedures?

### ***Review***

- All of your written safety and health programs and documentation relating to the programs (see the most recent VPP Federal Register Notice) available for OSHA review?

### ***Concurrence***

- Formal signed statements from any collective bargaining agents indicating support of your application to the VPP? Where no collective bargaining agent is authorized, employees understand the VPP and raise no serious objections?