

OHSA Voluntary Protection Program (VPP)

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02/23/2011



What is VPP?

- OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) was adopted in 1982 to promote a voluntary cooperative effort among government, industry, and labor to:
 - address worker safety and health issues, and
 - expand worker protection by preventing or controlling safety & health hazards at the worksite
- VPP recognizes employers and employees for worksites that have:
 - implemented comprehensive & successful safety & health programs, and
 - achieved injury/illness rates below their industry's national average

What is the focus of VPP?

- VPP focuses on comprehensive employer management systems that have active employee involvement.
- The VPP management system is:
 - performance-based,
 - requires participants to identify their specific hazards, needs, and appropriate protective measures, and
 - provides sufficient flexibility for any industry.

Is VPP successful?

- The success of the federal VPP is evident in the continuing submission of applications from both small and large businesses, Federal agencies, and both union and non-union companies.
- Generally, these companies view OSHA standards as a minimum level of safety and health performance and set their own more stringent standards for effective employee protection.
- Statistical evidence shows the Days Away / Restricted / Transferred case rate of VPP sites is 52% below the average for their industry.

Who can apply for VPP?

- VPP's original focus was on individual fixed worksites where the employer had the responsibility & authority to control safety and health.
- VPP has evolved and now accepts applications from employers with mobile workforces, such as the construction industry, as well as corporate applications for multi-facility applicants.

What is the VPP process?

- VPP establishes performance-based criteria for a managed safety and health system.
- Federal OSHA or state equivalent invite employers to apply, utilizing a fairly common application process.
- The application is assessed against the performance-based criteria and is accepted or rejected.
- For accepted applications, a rigorous onsite evaluation is scheduled and performed by a team of OSHA safety and health experts.
- If the onsite review, including management, labor and employee interviews, is successful, the applicant is recommended for VPP participation at the STAR or MERIT level.
- In AZ, the ADOSH VPP only recognizes STAR participation.

What are the key elements of VPP?

- Management commitment and employee involvement ... should be documented / issued at the highest level of the company.
- Hazard prevention and control ... successfully managed and implemented by management, labor and employees.
- Comprehensive safety and health programs ... including documented safe work practices, hazard assessments, incident investigations, training, and safety and health audits.
- Technical expertise ... necessary to ensure appropriate safety and health program development and requirements compliance.

What are the benefits of VPP participation?

- Provides for state and national recognition of an employer's excellent safety and health programs.
- Affirms management and labor's commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace for employees.
- Promotes increased employee participation in safety and health programs.
- Establishes a collaborative partnership with government and industry.

Can a state-plan state participate in VPP?

- Although the VPP is a federal OSHA program, most state-plan states have adopted the VPP process.
- The Industrial Commission of Arizona, Division of Occupational Safety and Health has adopted the VPP STAR program.
- ADOSH currently has 33 participants at the STAR level including, IBM, Raytheon, Fluor Daniels, Honeywell, USPS in Tucson and Chandler, and the CAP.

What is an SGE?

- The Special Government Employee (SGE) program was established by federal OSHA to allow industry employees to work alongside OSHA during VPP onsite evaluations.
- Qualified volunteers from approved VPP sites are encouraged by OSHA to participate in the SGE program.
- After submitting an application and completing the required training, volunteers are sworn in as SGEs and are approved to assist as VPP on-site evaluation team members and/or to mentor companies wishing to apply for VPP.

Why SGEs?

- SGEs bring a unique perspective to the VPP team effort ...
 - they have already participated in the VPP process
 - they are safety and health professionals with onsite expertise in safety and health program implementation
 - they can take back to their sites, the ideas and best practices they observe to further improve worker protections at their sites

What are the benefits of becoming an SGE?

- Working alongside OSHA personnel and sharing perspectives on safety and health.
- Meeting and networking with highly qualified safety and health professionals.
- Learning firsthand by observing best practices in safety and health.
- Exchanging valuable information, experiences and lessons learned with VPP applicants and participants (mentoring).
- Earning CSP and CIH certification points after successfully completing the VPP SGE training and a VPP onsite evaluation.
- Taking OSHA training courses at OTI free of charge.

The SGE program encompasses the spirit of VPP ... industry, labor and government cooperation, and continuous improvement of worker safety.