



POSTAL NEWS

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U.S. Postal Service becomes first federal agency accepted into OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Corporate initiative

Pilot program streamlines VPP application and onsite evaluation processes

WASHINGTON — Recognized for its industry leadership, its employee-driven safety initiatives, and its commitment to improving workplace safety and health programs, the U.S. Postal Service has become the first federal agency to be accepted into the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) new Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Corporate pilot program.

The VPP program emphasizes combined efforts by management, craft employees, and union representatives to identify and eliminate unsafe working conditions and practices to reduce the number and severity of job-related injuries and illnesses. The Postal Service currently has 20 work sites participating in the VPP program and expects to add 65 more by the end of fiscal year 2005. VPP Corporate streamlines the application and onsite evaluation processes and eliminates redundant documentation of effective safety and health management systems for multiple sites within the same corporation.

"Safety and health add value to our lives, to our workplace, and to our business," said Postmaster General John E. Potter during a VPP Corporate ceremony at Postal Service headquarters. "It's a triple win: Our employees benefit, the organization benefits, and the country benefits," he said, adding the VPP Corporate pilot initiative is a driving force for the continued safety and health of the more than 700,000 career postal employees working at more than 37,000 facilities nationwide.

According to Jonathan L. Snare, Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Postal Service was accepted to VPP Corporate after a comprehensive evaluation of its safety and health management systems at its headquarters in Washington, DC.

The evaluation included key aspects of the Postal Service's safety and health policies, programs and records, as well as interviews with senior managers, executives, and union officials. Also key to VPP Corporate approval was the scope and strength of the Postal Service's internal preparation and prescreening processes to ensure VPP readiness at postal sites prior to OSHA onsite evaluations.

"The Postal Service, as a designated VPP Corporate Pilot Participant, is testament to the commitment of the USPS to VPP and worker safety and health," said Snare. "OSHA values your distinguished participation in VPP and the excellence of your corporate safety and health management systems."

In approving Postal Service acceptance into the VPP Corporate pilot program, OSHA officials congratulated the agency on six areas of excellence:

- Management and union safety leadership;
- Safety Toolkit, a comprehensive online safety information, management, and tracking system;
- National Performance Assessment, which includes a safety performance scorecard;
- Performance Evaluation Guide, which evaluates and tracks worksite safety and health improvements;
- Training programs; and,
- Data tracking systems.

Since the baseline year of 2001, successful Postal Service safety leadership efforts have resulted in a 36 percent reduction in the total number of OSHA injuries and illnesses. In fiscal year 2004, total OSHA illnesses and injuries were reduced by 17 percent compared to the previous year — a reduction of more than 8,000 illnesses and injuries.

VPP Corporate, along with “OSHA Challenge” and the “USPS Ergonomic Strategic Partnership,” are three initiatives the Postal Service and its unions have implemented to work cooperatively with OSHA to improve employee workplace safety and health.

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Among those celebrating the Postal Service becoming the first federal agency to be accepted into OSHA's VPP Corporate pilot program are (L to R) Jonathan Snare, Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA, John F. Hegarty, President of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, Samuel Pulcrano, USPS Safety Performance Manager, William Burrus, President of the American Postal Workers Union, and Postmaster General John E. Potter.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 142 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider delivering to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$69 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume — some 206 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year — and serves seven million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide.