OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH)

- **1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Directive establishes policy to conform to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive 7700.
- **2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS.** This Directive outlines policies and responsibilities for the VHA OSH Program. Funding for the program is paid from existing funds at those VHA organizations establishing programs.
- **3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to Director (10NS) at 202-461-4547.
- 4. RELATED DOCUMENTS. VHA Handbook 7701.01.
- **5. RESCISSIONS.** VHA Directive 7701, dated March 13, 2003, is rescinded.
- **6. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of August 2015.

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OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH)

- **1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines policy and assigns responsibility for the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program in accordance with Federal regulations, Executive Orders (E.O.) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy.
- **2. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that VHA organizations must coordinate efforts to ensure that all OSH requirements are satisfied, to maintain safe and healthful work environments for VHA employees and volunteers through the application of hazard assessment, safe work practices, administrative and engineering controls, employee training, personal protective equipment, and be in compliance with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive 7700.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. <u>Under Secretary for Health.</u> The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for:
 - (1) Implementing the VA Safety Steering Committee's Safety Strategic Plan (SSP).
 - (2) Overseeing VHA OSH Program and policies.
- (3) Establishing OSH Program performance standards for the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.
 - (4) Procuring staffing and funding resources to ensure an effective OSH Program.
- b. <u>Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.</u> The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management, or designee, is responsible for:
- (1) Identifying a formal process for ensuring OSH technical support and services to VHA Offices located within the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), but outside of the authority of the VISN (e.g., Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacies), VA Offices and Administrations located within the VISN (e.g., Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Offices and National Cemetery Administration (NCA)) as established in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- (2) Overseeing the development and implementation of the VHA OSH Program and policies.
- (3) Establishing and overseeing the Office of Safety, Health, Environmental, and Emergency Management (10NS).

- (4) Establishing OSH performance standards for the Director Safety, Health, Environmental, and Emergency Management and for VISN Directors.
 - (5) Ensuring staffing and funding are adequate to implement the VHA OSH Program.
 - (6) Reviewing and approving the annual OSH Program evaluation.
 - (7) Establishing a VHA National Safety and Health Leadership Committee.
- (8) Establishing national VHA policy for violence prevention; ergonomics; biological and communicable disease prevention for non-bloodborne pathogens; and motor vehicle safety.
 - c. **VISN Directors.** Each VISN Director is responsible for:
- (1) Ensuring all VHA employees and volunteers within the VISN are provided a safe and healthful work environment.
- (2) Ensuring compliance with OSH requirements contained in Federal laws, regulations, E.Os, VA and VHA Directives, and OSH articles of collective bargaining agreements.
- (3) Developing plans to achieve the OSH policies and goals established by the Under Secretary for Health and the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.
 - (4) Administering the Annual Workplace Evaluation (AWE) Program.
 - (5) Establishing a VISN Safety and Health Leadership Committee.
- (6) Ensuring adequate staffing, funding, training, support, and resources are provided to local VHA facilities for implementing VHA OSH policies and requirements.
- (7) Ensuring VISN construction and maintenance programs, designs, and specifications comply with VHA OSH requirements.
- (8) Recognizing significant contributions to the VISN and facility OSH Program through special awards.
 - (9) Establishing OSH performance standards for VHA facility Directors.
- (10) Ensuring the employee's right to report unsafe or unhealthful working conditions without reprisal.
 - d. **Facility Director.** Each facility Director is responsible for:
 - (1) Ensuring a safe and healthful work environment for all VHA staff and volunteers.

- (2) Ensuring compliance with OSH requirements contained in Federal laws and regulations, E.Os, VA and VHA Directives (including VA Directive 7700), and OSH articles of collective bargaining agreements.
- (3) Developing plans to achieve the OSH policies and goals established by the VISN Director.
 - (4) Participating in the facility AWE.
 - (5) Establishing a facility Safety and Health Leadership Committee.
- (6) Ensuring adequate staffing, funding, training, support, and resources are provided for implementing VHA OSH policies and requirements.
 - (7) Involving employee representatives in the OSH Program administration.
- (8) Promoting the participation of staff and union representatives in local Federal Safety and Health Councils.
- (9) Ensuring the employee's right to report unsafe, unhealthful working conditions without reprisal.
- (10) Notifying the VISN Director of any work-related employee fatality, and in-patient hospitalization of three or more employees, including contractors' employees, as soon as possible.
 - (11) Maintaining an infrastructure required to achieve OSH Program implementation.
 - (12) Ensuring that facility supervisors:
 - (a) Enforce OSH policy and standards within their assigned workplace.
 - (b) Evaluate the hazards of each job.
- (c) Identify and report unsafe and unhealthful workplace conditions and initiate corrective action.
- (d) Ensure that all employees are released from duty to attend safety training, medical surveillance, respirator fit testing, and other activities required by the safety and occupational health offices.
- (e) Encourage employees to use safe-work practices and to make suggestions for improving the OSH Program.
- (f) Correct employees demonstrating unsafe work practices; and initiate re-training, as appropriate.

- (g) Initiate investigation of employee workplace injuries and illnesses while ensuring employees receive prompt and appropriate medical attention.
- (h) Enter and complete employee injury and illness Incident Reports in the Automated Safety Incident Surveillance and Tracking System (ASISTS) in a timely manner.
- (i) Ensure employees receive OSH training in the recognition of workplace hazards, safe work practices, and the use of required personal protective equipment.
 - (j) Provide required personal protective equipment for hazardous work processes.
- (k) Notify facility management of any employee fatality, and any in-patient hospitalization of three or more employees, including contractors' employees, as soon as possible, but no later than 30 minutes after the discovery of the incident by any employee.
 - (13) Ensuring each facility employee is aware that they are to:
- (a) Follow safe work practices and the proper use of required personal protective equipment.
- (b) Report unsafe or unhealthful workplace conditions to supervisors and initiate corrective action or isolation of the hazard, where appropriate.
 - (c) Report work-related injuries and illnesses to supervisor.
 - (d) Complete assigned medical surveillance and training requirements.

4. REFERENCES

- a. E.O. 12196, Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees.
- b. OSHA Publication 2014, Recordkeeping and Reporting Guidelines for Federal Agencies.
- c. Public Law 91-596, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act), Section 19.
- d. Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 1960, Basic Program Elements for Federal Employee OSH Programs and Related Matters.
 - e. VA Directive 7700, Occupational Safety and Health Program.
 - f. Negotiated Collective Bargaining Unit Agreements.