

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

FY 2005 Annual Report Executive Summary

Statistics

Utilizing statistics provided by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and posted on their Web site, total employment the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) declined by 880 employees in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, to a new level of 232,621 employees (See Figure 1). There were 10,749 total cases and 4,990 lost time (LT) cases created in FY 2005; less than a one percent decrease from FY 2004 numbers (See Figure 2).

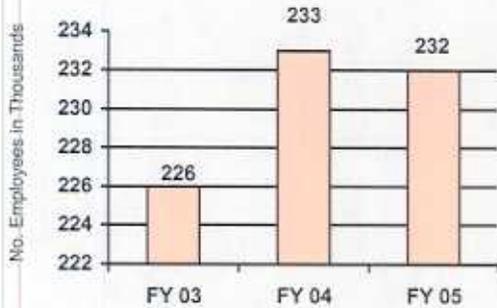


Figure 1: Total number of VA employees for the past three fiscal years.

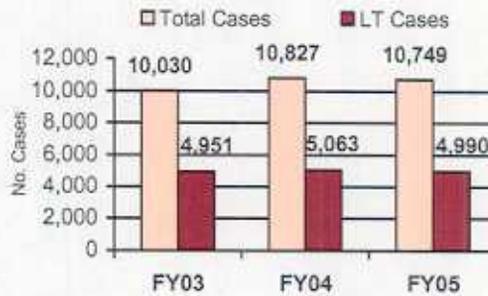


Figure 2: Total cases and total lost time cases for the past three fiscal years.

Total and lost time rates declined slightly from FY 2004. The total case rate (TCR) for FY 2005 was 4.62 and the lost time case rate (LTCR) was 2.15 (See Figure 3). Timeliness of claims submissions for VA overall improved to 86.9 percent during the reporting period (See Figure 4).

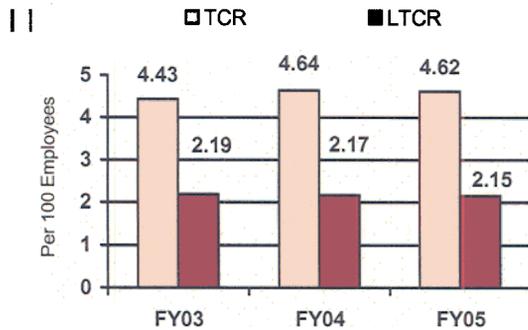


Figure 3: Total injury and illness and total lost time case rates for the past three fiscal years.

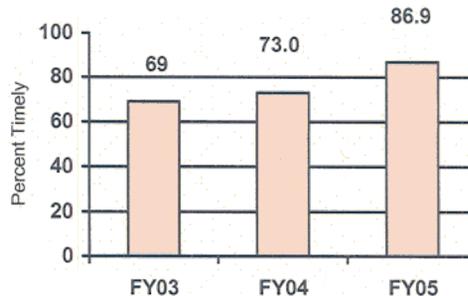


Figure 4: Timeliness of injury and illness claims filed by VA for the past three fiscal years.

st production days, as calculated using DOL rates, improved during the reporting period (See Figure 5). VA's workers' compensation (WC) costs for Chargeback Year (CBY) 2005 increased less than one percent compared to CBY 2004 (See Figure 6). Note: In CBY 2004, during DOL's switch to their new automated tracking system, DOL reported to VA that they experienced an anomaly that resulted in data collection problems. As a result, the cost data reported for CBY 2004 in relation to CBY 2005 is lower than might be expected.

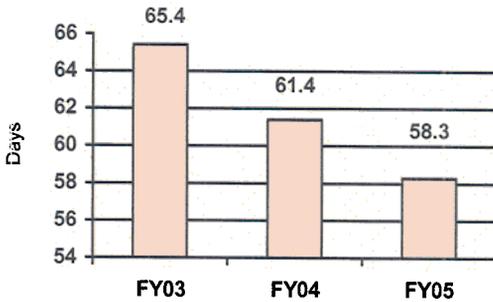


Figure 5: Lost Production Days for the past three fiscal years.

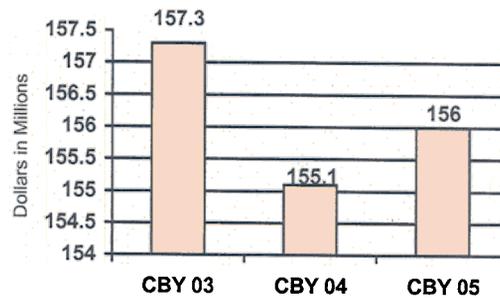


Figure 6: Workers' compensation costs for the past three Chargeback years (CBY).

Overall Progress Under SHARE

VA made progress on all four of the President's Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Program goals, improving on all elements of the initiative in FY 2005. VA did not meet the total and lost time rates for injury and illness of the President's goals when using Office of Personal Management FTEE figures, which are used by OSHA to calculate these rates. However, when VA used hours worked from its Personnel and Accounting Integrated Data (PAID) system to calculate rates, VA met the lost time rate goal (see Annual Report, pp. 2-3). Timeliness goals for claim submission were exceeded (See Fig. 4 above). Lost production days as calculated using DOL rates improved from 65.4 days in FY03 to 58.3 days in FY05, a 10.9 percent improvement (See Fig. 5 above). Although the number of WC cases involving motor vehicles declined by 22, there were 3 fatalities in FY 2005 (See Annual Report, p. 14). The data provided is based on WC claims involving motor vehicles. Data for property loss due to motor vehicle crashes and seat belt usage data are currently not available.

Training

In FY 2005, all VA Administrations were engaged in assessing training needs, developing programs based on those assessments, and implementing the programs. Major training initiatives focused on OSHA's new recordkeeping requirement for Federal agencies, hazard recognition and abatement, emergency management and continuity of operations, WC case management, and concerns expressed by employee unions.

Training focused on hazards related to health care and veterans service, such as alleviation of stress, aggression, and violence in the workplace; patient movement and lifting; ergonomics; and workplace fatigue. In support of these initiatives, programs were either created or enhanced to provide far-reaching benefits to field program managers and employees. VA sponsored, with the collaboration of OSHA and the U.S. Postal Service, the production of an educational video that has been used by all Federal agencies (as far away as the Middle East). The video is available by streamed internet on VA's Occupational Safety and Health Web page, which OSHA's Web page is also linked too (www.va.gov/vasafety/page.cfm?pg=626).

Whenever appropriate, distance learning strategies were applied to training programs to foster the most effective and efficient use of resources and employee availability. VA has a catalogue of safety courses, supported by our Learning University and Employee Education Service. VA organizations developed programs for satellite broadcasts, CD-ROM, and web-based applications. These initiatives created new opportunities to reach busy employees and managers by permitting employees to view material during non-traditional timeframes.

Conferences and inter-agency task groups were frequently used to develop and implement national training programs for VA. Other Federal agencies, including OSHA and union partners, have participated and continue to be invited.

Accomplishments

VA has a number of unique and significant accomplishments that represent a high level of commitment, energy, and expertise.

In recognition of their accomplishments, VA's OSHA Recordkeeping Project Team received two Telly Awards for best video education productions. VA also coordinated the curriculum for the Seventh Annual Workers' Compensation Conference and Exposition, a government-wide conference which provides training at the beginner and expert levels. VA's Occupational Safety and Health Web site was also cited by "Webtrends," an information technology journal, as a highly utilized and significant safety resource.

The Department has established a Workers' Compensation Steering Committee to focus on improving VA's WC program. The Committee is comprised of representatives from Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and Office of Management. An example of this group's achievements is the development and approval of the WC Strategic Plan which encompasses five major goals: Case Management; Return to Work; Education; Partnerships; and Fraud, Waste and Abuse.

Each Administration made improvements to their safety program. VHA maintains an aggressive safety staff infrastructure and program detailed in written policies, handbooks, and guidebooks. VHA also has continued to use performance measures and monitors for Veterans Integrated Service Network directors. VBA has their own program detailed in written policies and handbooks. VBA developed and began implementation of initiatives on hazard control workplace violence. NCA has an infrastructure of full and collateral duty staff. Veterans Canteen Service eliminated the major causes of repetitive stress at VA's Central Office Canteen and established their own safety Web site.

Goals

VA continues its commitment to achieving the President's SHARE initiative.

Special emphasis programs are planned by all VA organizations to enhance training and education programs, protect employee privacy, encourage the use of "best practices," encourage use of information technology to facilitate education and program management, and to establish administrative controls for ensuring all employees are provided a safe and healthful working environment.

These programs also include targeted program evaluations and studies to identify workplace hazards and to develop collaborative approaches in mitigating or removing those hazards.