



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

JUN 13 1996

Mr. John E. Plummer
Director, Office of Federal Agency Programs
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room N 3112
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Mr. Plummer:

Enclosed is the Annual Occupational Safety and Health Program Report for Fiscal Year 1995 for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as required by 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1960.74. We are pleased with the accomplishments of our program during this period and appreciate the ongoing support of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Office of Federal Agency Programs. Through the cooperative efforts of our respective organizations, I hope to see further accomplishments within VA in the area of employee safety and health.

If your staff has any questions concerning this report or the VA Occupational Safety and Health program, they may contact the Director, Occupational Safety and Health, Mr. Gary R. Mills, on 535-8685.

Sincerely yours,


Eugene A. Brickhouse
Designated Agency Safety
and Health Official

Enclosure

Federal Agency Occupational Safety and Health Program Assessment FY 1995
Department/Agency Name: The Department of Veterans Affairs

Official who is authorized to answer follow-up question about this survey:

Name: Gary R. Mills Telephone: 202-565-8685
E-Mail address: millsгар@mail.va.gov Fax Number: 202-565-4906

1. At what organizational level is your Department's/Agency's Designated Safety and Health Official (DASHO)?

B.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Assistant Secretary/Administrator/Secretary
C.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deputy Assistant Secretary/Administrator
D.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Office Director or equivalent
E.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Division Director or equivalent
F.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Branch Chief or equivalent
G.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section Chief or equivalent

2. What percentage of the time does the DASHO spend on safety and health?

A. 0-1% B. 2-5% C. 6-10% D. 11-20% E. over 20%

3. At what organizational level is your Safety and Health manager for the National Safety and Health Program Office (HQ)?

- A. Office Director, who reports through a Deputy Assistant Secretary to the DASHO.
B. Division Director or equivalent who reports through one supervisor for access to DASHO
C. Branch Chief or equivalent who reports through two supervisors for access to DASHO.
D. Section Chief or equivalent

4. Has your Department/Agency Head delegated appropriate authority to the safety and health staff to establish and implement a Department/Agency-wide safety and health program?

- A. Yes
B. No, explain authorities

5. Is your Department/Agency's national safety and health office a line or staff function?

- A. Line, go to next question.
B. Staff Function. (describe)
The VA's Office of Occupational Safety and Health provides staff support to the DASHO. Line authority for VA facilities is delegated to various organizations within VA.

6. Does the DASHO's safety and health staff provide input for major changes in the working conditions of employees (e.g., performs exposure assessments of changes in work procedures, reviews organizational changes to determine impact on safety and health program, analyzes facility closures and consolidations, etc.)?

- A. No, go to next question.
B. Yes, explain the process

7. Has your Department/Agency appointed "DASHOs" at major field organizations (regions)?

A. No, go to next question.

The proposed OSH policy for VA requires that each major sub-agency/division within VA establish its own OSH program which would be the responsibility of a key management person within each sub-agency/division. The proposed policy is subject to the VA concurrence process and will be negotiated with the Employee Bargaining Units.

B. Yes, explain.

8. Does your Department/Agency employ safety and health staff at field locations (regional/local)?

A. No, go to next question.

B. Yes: There are both regional and facility safety and health personnel.

9. Has your Department/Agency established a national Labor/Management Safety and Health Committee?

A. No, skip to next question.

Yes, rate the following characteristic as they relate to your situation.

	Fully describes	Mostly describes	Generally describes	Does not describe	N/A
B. Membership is a 50/50 management and representatives of employees					
C. Committee reviews and approves Department's/Agency's budget and resource allocation					
D. Committee reviews and approves the annual plan of operation for safety and health program					
E. Committee reviews and comments on audits, inspection, injury/illness data, and exposure assessments.					

10. Has your Department/Agency established local Labor/Management Safety and Health Committees?

A. <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes					
	Fully describes	Mostly describes	Generally describes	Does not describe	N/A
B. Membership is 50/50 management and representatives of employees				X	
C. Members have received training to participate in safety and health decision			X		
D. Committee reviews and approves the establishment's budget and resource allocation				X	
E. Committee reviews and approves the annual plan of operation for safety and health program			X		
F. Members serve on safety and health inspection teams and are trained to conduct inspections				X	
G. Committee reviews and comments on audits, inspections, injury/illness data, and exposure assessments			X		

11. Please provide the employment numbers (staffing levels) for your safety and health program.

Program Levels	FY 92	FY 95:	Projected FY 96
A. No. of employees in Department	260,205	263,904	N/A
B. No. of OSH professionals on HQ OSH staff Details below:	9	8	8
DASHO's staff	3	3	3
at Administration Levels, (e.g. VHA)	6	5	5
C. No. of OSH professionals at Regional Level Details below:	49	55	N/A
0018 Safety manager, GS 13-14	1	2	N/A
0690 Industrial hygienist, GS 13-14	27	31	N/A
0830 Safety engineer, GS 13-14	21	22	N/A
D. No. of OSH professionals at facility levels Details below:	312	334	N/A
0018 Safety manager, GS 5-12	193	210	N/A
0690 Industrial hygienist, GS 5-12	108	112	N/A
0830 Safety engineer, GS 5-12	11	12	N/A
E. No. of personnel assigned OSH as collateral duty Details below:	160	160	160
In National Cemetery System	110	110	110
In Veterans Benefits Administration	50	50	50

NOTE: Figures for the number of 0018s, 1690s, and 0830s from Coin-Pai 180-4, "Full time and Part time employees - occupation and grade VA-wide", 09/30/92 and 09/30/95

N/A - Not Available (Due to recent major reorganization of VHA from a Regional (4) structure to a Network (22) structure.)

12. Please provide the following budget information.

Function	FY 92	FY 95	Projected FY 96
A. Department/Agency-wide Congressional budget	\$33,933,021,000	\$38,190,162,000	\$38,333,000,000
B. Department/Agency-wide Safety and Health budget	\$10,000 training funds 214,374 OSH staff at HQ \$224,374	\$160,000 training funds 289,592 OSH staff at HQ \$449,592	\$5,000 Training 304,072 OSH staff HQ \$309,072
Administrative Support of: National Training Program Administration(s) Regional Facilities	-0- N/A N/A N/A	\$1.2 million N/A N/A N/A	\$1.8 million N/A N/A N/A
These figures <u>exclude</u> staffing.			

NOTE: Information on the congressional budget is from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget (041).

13. At what level within your Organization does the primary responsibility for these OSH activities reside?

ACTIVITY	DEPARTMENT	REGIONAL/ DISTRICT OFFICES	FACILITY	NOT PERFORMED
A. Policy and program documentation	X			
B. Planning and budgeting	X	X	X	
C. Research and development				X
D. Training/learning (employee awareness)	X (develops training materials)		X	
E. Program auditing	X			
F. Remedial and corrective action plans			X	
G. Inspections and IH surveys		X	X	
H. Injury/illness recordkeeping			X	
I. Medical surveillance			X	
J. Safety and health committee			X	
K. Emergency response planning			X	
L. Information tracking	X (develops data base)		X	

14. How do you rate your Department's internal annual/periodic inspection and IH surveys?

INSPECTION	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVG.	ACCEPT- ABLE	POOR	INADEQUATE	N/A
A. Implementing a plan for inspecting workplaces annually	See Note Below					
B. Sufficient number of qualified inspectors to perform inspections			X*			
C. Employees and/or their representatives are given an opportunity to point out unsafe conditions during inspections and surveys	X					
D. Inspectors use proper equipment and follow approved protocol			X			
E. Findings are contained in written reports which cite applicable regulatory references			X			
F. Abatement is timely			X			
G. Notices of unsafe/unhealthful conditions are posted to convey to employees the seriousness of hazards and regulations/standards violated		X				

Note: Facilities conduct annual self inspections. However, independent annual workplace inspections conducted by Regional OSH personnel were not conducted at all VA facilities.

* Staffing levels appear to be adequate, but utilization of this staffing was not adequate to enable the inspection of all VA facilities.

15. Within Department, what organizations are the primary safety and health customer?

A. Customer 1	Employees/volunteers
B. Customer 2	OSH staff at the facility/Regions
C. Customer 3	Management officials

16. Rate the significance of safety and health issues for your Department

Issues	Extremely Important	Important	Unimportant
A. Two years ago (FY 93)		X	
B. Current (FY 95)		X	
C. Near Future (FY 96)		X	

17. Has your Department Head assigned or allocated sufficient professional safety and health staff to properly implement your safety and health program agency-wide?

- A. Yes, go to next question
- B. No, explain deficiencies

Staffing appears adequate; however, a comprehensive evaluation of OSH staffing needs has not been completed.

18. Has your Department/Agency recently published and distributed to all employees a formal safety and health "policy statement" signed by the Agency head?

- A. Yes. The Secretary issued a statement on June 1, 1993, and goals have been established in FY 1994, FY 1995, and FY 1996.
- B. No, explain deficiencies

19. What is the status of the safety and health program within your Department/Agency? Check one column heading

A. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emerging	B. <input type="checkbox"/> Developing	C. <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced
1. Little or no guidelines	1. Basic guidance materials and training	1. Highly specialized technical support
2. Little or no coordination with other functions	2. Heavy oversight	2. Performance monitoring
3. Site-specific support	3. Integrated into some processes	3. Integrated into daily processes

20. Should Federal agencies be penalized like the private sector?

A. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, go to next question		
<input type="checkbox"/> No, if not, why not? Please check all that apply	A. <input type="checkbox"/>	Cannot mobilize as rapidly
	B. <input type="checkbox"/>	Older facilities cannot meet new standards
	C. <input type="checkbox"/>	Less funding flexibility
	D. <input type="checkbox"/>	Less control over resources
	E. <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

21. How comfortable are you that: (place X in each row)

Issues	Extremely Comfortable		Comfortable		Not Comfortable
	1	2	3	4	5
A. The safety and health risks of your employees are well understood and there is a plan in place to deal with these risks.			X		
B. Your agency is in compliance with Federal Safety and Health regulations			X		
C. Your Agency has access to adequate staff resources (internal or external) to address your safety and health program and risks				X	
D. Employees have access to a formal channel for reporting unsafe or unhealthful working conditions	X				
E. Identified unsafe and unhealthful working conditions are promptly abated				X	
F. Your Agency has a formal system for investigating alleged acts of reprisal and/or coercion for the reporting of safety/health hazards			X*		

* VA uses the employee grievance procedure to handle alleged reprisals.

22. Has your Department/Agency developed a safety and health program in accordance with the requirements of Section 19 of OSHA, Executive Order 12196, and 29 CFR Part 1960?

- A. Yes. While VA's OSH program has not been updated to address 29 CFR 1960 requirements, VA has met those requirements.
 B. No.

23. Select the level that best describes the current approach of your organization's safety and health program.

- A. Proactive; manages risks and compliance
 B. Compliance based; merits existing regulatory requirements
 C. Reactive; focuses on problems as they arise

24. Does the Department/Agency have structured safety and health training program for:

Category	Yes	No
A. Management officials	X	
B. Supervisors	X	
C. Safety and health specialists		X*
D. Safety and health inspectors		X*
E. Collateral duty safety and health personnel		X*
F. Members of certified safety and health committee	Not Applicable, no certified committee	
G. Employees	X	
H. Employee Representatives	X	

* VA facilities provide training to facility level safety and health personnel.

28. How does your organization ensure that subordinate units have effective programs to comply with the organization's safety and health policies? Mark all that apply.

- A. Perform periodic audits
- B. Develop prototype procedures in response to new regulations
- C. Share procedures across organization
- D. Review corrective action plans
- E. Conduct training
- F. Conduct organizational-wide safety and health training
- G. Annual formal and frequent informal facility inspections
- H. Provide expert technical and/or management resources
- I. Develop generic or model programs
- J. Other, please specify. _____

29. How would you describe your organization's safety and health program? Mark all that apply.*

- A. Fully funded
- B. Meets requirements
- C. Insufficient resources
- D. Leading edge approach
- E. Praised by regulators
- F. Trusted by public
- G. Senior management support
- H. Equal to other operating programs
- I. Keeps operating programs out of trouble
- J. Employees have taken ownership of the program
- K. Criticized by public
- L. Criticized by regulators
- M. Other: _____

* Because of the size of VA, the answer for this question varies from facility to facility. While the answers listed are intended to reflect the overall Department, many VA facilities would have excellent programs.

30. As the Department/Agency responds to budget decreases, how will the safety and health budget be determined? Rank the factors according to their influence on the budget decision. (1 is the most important)

- A. [6] Percent Decrease
- B. [2] Laws and regulations
- C. [5] Future cost avoidance
- D. [9] Response to lawsuits/criminal prosecution
- E. [4] Employee/union action
- F. [8] Congressional interest
- G. [3] VA safety and health personnel influence
- H. [1] Secretary/Administrator interest
- I. [7] Causal data
- J. [] Other: _____

31. What is the most frustrating challenges for safety and health management professionals? Please check all that apply.

- A. Too much technical information required
- B. Too many unnecessary administrative requirements and burdens
- C. No baselines for comparing Federal programs to the private sector
- D. Inability to use private sector management options
- E. Frequency of changes in regulation and the frequency of new regulations
- F. Political considerations to be addressed when developing corrective action plans
- G. Not enough funding (annual rather than long-term budgets) to do the job right
- H. Senior management is not supportive
- I. High costs of gathering data versus problem solving
- J. Employees are not supportive
- K. Level and number of administrative approvals for safety and health decisions
- L. Conflicting interpretations of requirements
- M. No authority delegated to safety and health staff to order changes in working conditions
- N. Media Considerations
- O. Not enough technical staff and contractor support to so the job right
- P. Extent of approvals/data required by regulators
- Q. Increased requirements without increased human/financial resources to do the job.
- R. Other _____

32 Does your performance appraisal system evaluate individual performance in meeting safety and health goals for the following employees? Check all that apply.

A Senior managers B Middle managers C Safety and health professionals D general staff

33 How does your Department/Agency measure the performance of the safety and health program?

Indicators of safety and health programs have been developed by the Office of Occupational Safety and Health with input from facility and regional safety and health staffs.

34. How does your Department/Agency Administrator install a culture of safety and health throughout the organization?

Personal emphasis and support.

35. How is your Department/Agency Head informed of safety and health issues and successes?

By periodic briefings.