

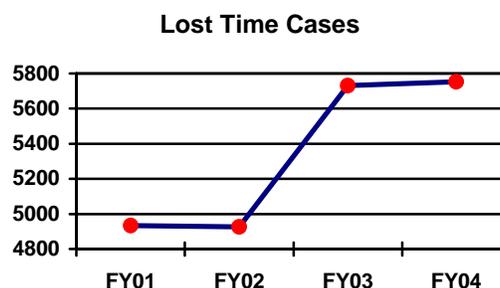
## Agency Fiscal Year 2004 Annual Report on Occupational Safety and Health

<b>Name of Department:</b> Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
<b>Address:</b> 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420
<b>Number of Employees Covered by this Report:</b> 236,427
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**1.A. USE AGENCY INJURY/ILLNESS DATA TO DISPLAY THE ANNUAL STATISTICS FOR FATALITIES AND LOST TIME DISABILITIES FOR THE REPORT YEAR AND, IF POSSIBLE, COMPARE THESE FATALITIES AND DISABILITIES WITH SIMILAR STATISTICS FOR THE PREVIOUS THREE-YEAR PERIOD. DATA BASED ON AGENCY CLAIMS SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION PROGRAMS (OWCP) IS PREFERRED, BUT INTERNAL ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORTING DATA (FARS) IS ACCEPTABLE, IF OWCP DATA IS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE AGENCY. THE DATA SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN CHARTS OR TABLES SO THAT CHANGES CAN BE EASILY SEEN OR DEMONSTRATED.**

### Lost Time Cases\*

	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
National Cemetery Administration (NCA)	91	78	73	83
Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)	145	135	116	128
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	4,587	4,605	5,406	5,398
OTHER	120	108	137	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,943</b>	<b>4,926</b>	<b>5,732</b>	<b>5,752</b>

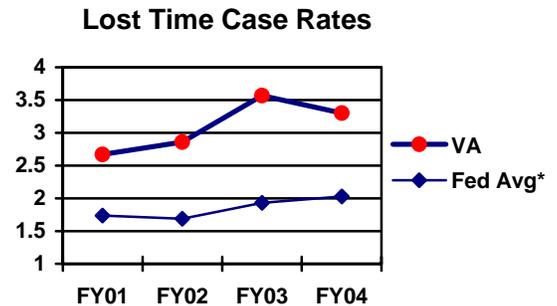


\* Excludes claims denied by OWCP.

In FY 2004, VA employee lost time injuries and illnesses cases rose by 20 cases from FY 2003. (Note: Data presented in this report are based on VA workers' compensation (WC) case status as of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter FY 2005. Minor fluctuations in rates may exist from earlier data presentations due to the changes in claim adjudication status.)

## Lost Time Case Rates

	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03**	FY 04**
NCA	7.32	7.95	7.58	7.69
VBA	1.34	2.45	1.26	1.34
VHA	2.74	2.89	3.74	3.40
OTHER	2.00	1.85	2.24	3.01
All VA	2.67	2.86	3.57	3.30



\* FY 2004 Federal average Lost Time Case Rates (LTCR) is currently a tentative figure provided by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Office of Federal Agency Programs and is subject to revision.

\*\*VHA's LTCR is currently under review to ensure appropriate employee work experience is included in the LTCR calculation. This assessment focuses primarily on medical residents and volunteers working for VHA. The calculation above reflects the historical calculation formula. FY 2004 LTCRs for VA and VHA will be updated upon completion of the assessment.

## Fatalities

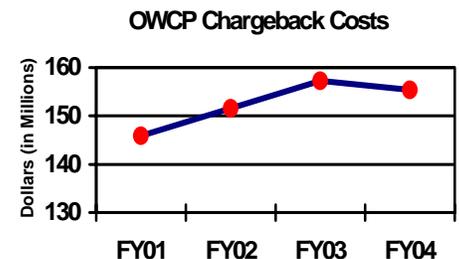
	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
NCA	0	1	0	0
VBA	0	0	0	0
VHA	0	2	6	2
OTHER	0	0	0	0
Total	0	3	6	2

Employee survivors filed two occupational fatality claims during FY 2004. The report will be amended should OWCP deny those claims under review.

**1.B. USE AGENCY DATA TO DISPLAY THE MOST RECENT OWCP CHARGEBACK AND COP COSTS AND, IF POSSIBLE, COMPARE THESE COSTS WITH SIMILAR STATISTICS FOR THE PREVIOUS THREE-YEAR PERIOD. THE DATA SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN CHARTS OR TABLES SO THAT CHANGES CAN BE EASILY SEEN OR DEMONSTRATED.**

## OWCP Chargeback Costs

	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04
NCA	\$2,022,260	\$2,087,212	\$2,326,421	\$2,321,477
VBA	\$3,498,232	\$3,807,450	\$3,886,071	\$3,698,474
VHA	\$138,193,789	\$143,463,337	\$148,179,062	\$146,474,118
OTHER	\$2,188,757	\$2,253,683	\$2,923,724	\$2,897,168
Total	\$145,903,038	\$151,611,682	\$157,315,278	\$155,391,237



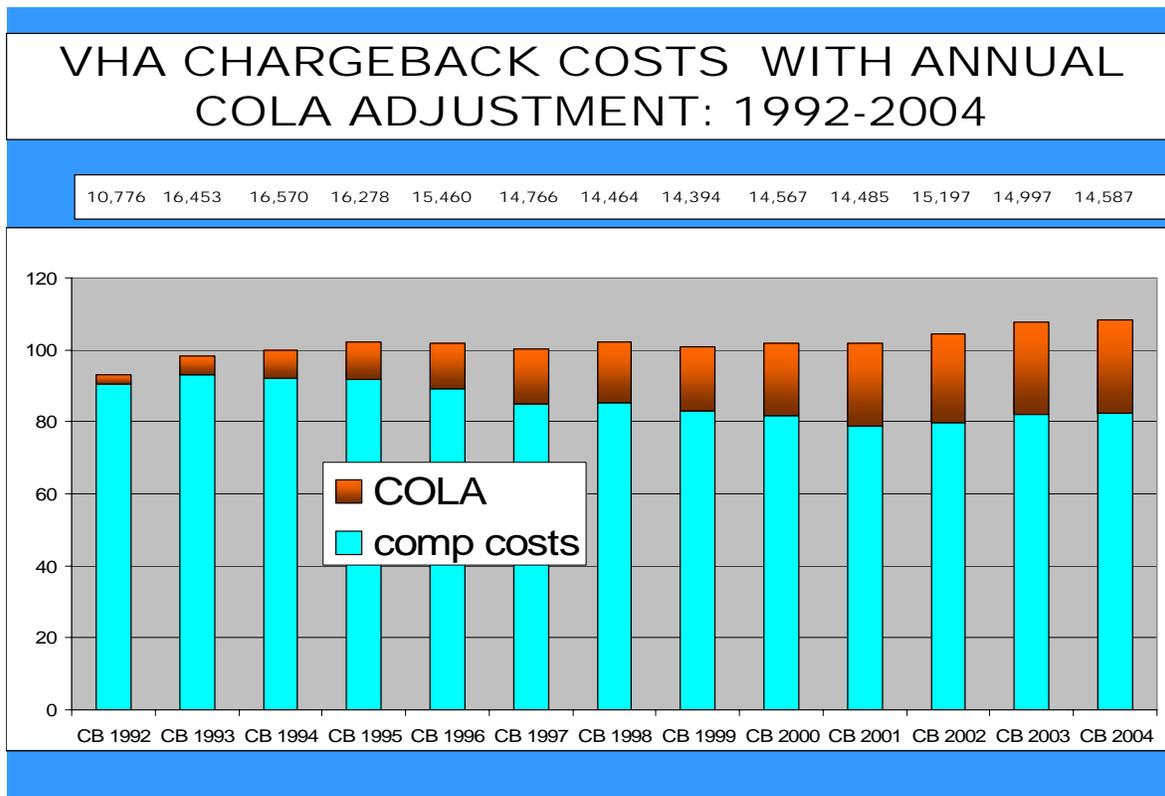
VA's FY 2003 WC costs fell 1.2 percent over the previous reporting period.

## Continuation of Pay (COP) Costs

Composite departmental COP cost data is not yet available for VA in the departmental Personnel and Accounting Integrated Data (PAID) system. While each VA Medical Center (VAMC) maintains COP documentation, the automated COP data collection process is pending modification of the departmental payroll system. Accordingly, departmental data is not available for this report.

### VHA:

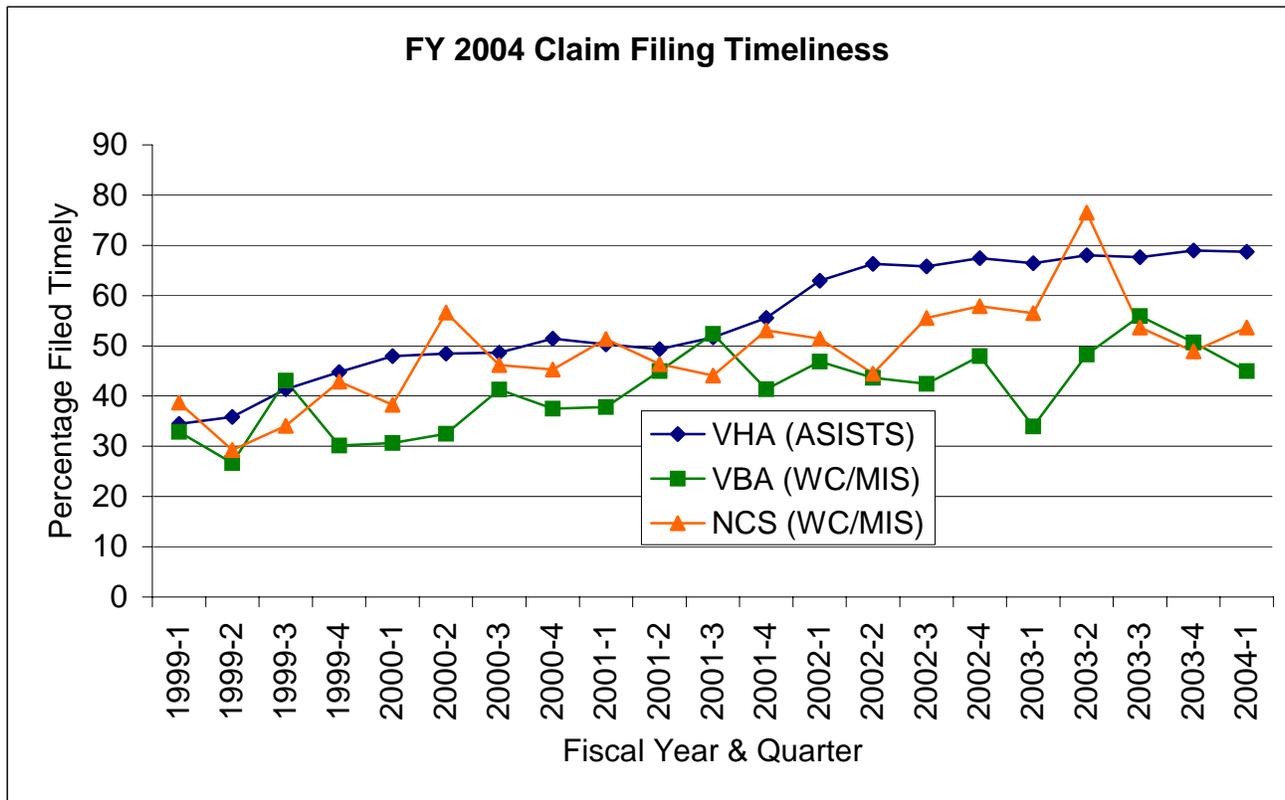
VHA's FY 2004 chargeback costs remain relatively unchanged through significant efforts on the part of the Agency to hold increased costs in check, especially in comparison to other Federal agencies. Over the last two years, the number of cases currently receiving compensation decreased from 15,197 (in 2002) to 14,997 (in 2003) to 14,587 (in 2004), a decrease of 610. This decentralization of the costs of the program has provided an incentive to more actively and aggressively manage claims. VHA is moving forward on its strategic plan.



VHA is organized into 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). VHA's FY 2004 VISN Director's performance monitor to improve timeliness of reporting showed a dramatic result. Timeliness improved to 87 percent for the last quarter. See chart on the following page.

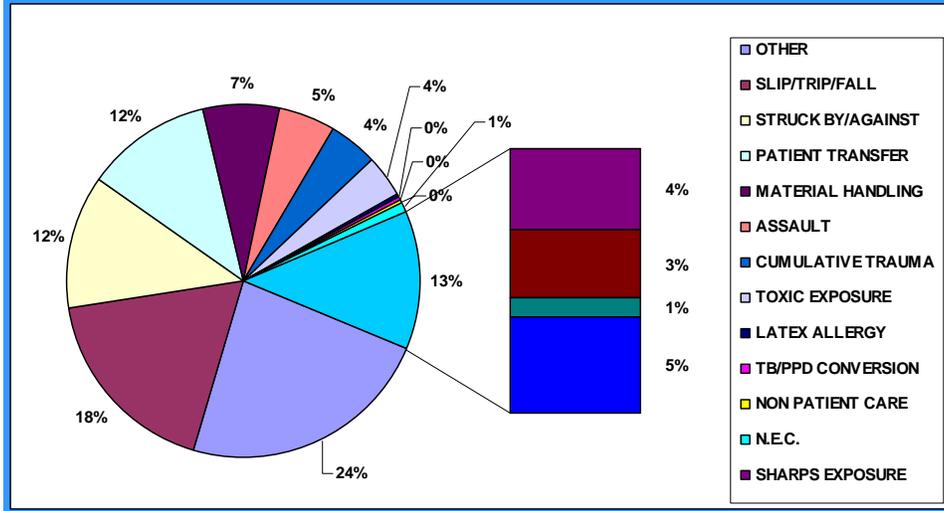
Implementation of the Automated Safety Surveillance and Tracking System (ASISTS), an in-house knowledge-management and injury reporting system, remains a core element of the VHA safety program. Each VAMC maintains the necessary documentation and enters it into the PAID system. VHA has entered ongoing discussions with the VA personnel/payroll office regarding implementation of the Defense Financial Accounting System (DFAS) over the next two years. The new program offers some promise of more accurate, consistent, and automated data availability in many areas, including COP.

Review of the data suggests that major inaccuracies persist, unexpectedly and unpredictably, throughout the system. No accurate agency data are available on COP costs at this time. A major effort has begun to improve data coding and national roll-up.



The injury reporting system confirms that, generally, this distribution of injuries has not changed substantially since the prior year.

## Distribution of Injuries: 1999 – 2004 cumulative



**1.C. USE AGENCY ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM OR SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS TO THE OSHA LOGS OR THE OWCP REPORTS FOR DETAILS WHICH WILL HELP EXPLAIN ANY SIGNIFICANT TRENDS AND MAJOR CAUSES OR SOURCES OF FATALITIES AND LOST TIME DISABILITIES WHICH OCCURRED LAST YEAR(S).**

**VA:** Analysis of VA’s loss experience by occupational series in FY 2004 using the WC and Occupational Safety and Health Management Information System (WC/OSH-MIS) indicated again this year that nurses accounted for the largest proportion of cases among VA employees. In-depth analyses of workplace conditions and procedures for nurses and other high-risk occupations were continued in FY 2004, with findings to be published in FY 2005.

The VA WC/OSH MIS remains a primary source for VA WC and OSH data. VA’s Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Office and WC continues to provide all VA organizations access to an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) capability for full operation. The WC/OSH MIS maintains the capability for all organizations to record non-reportable cases to facilitate inclusion of “near miss” data into facility hazard reduction efforts. The WC/OSH-MIS system provides accessible, easy-to-use, accurate, and timely information, with full Privacy Act protections, to both workers’ compensation claims managers and OSH professionals throughout VA. The VA WC-MIS is currently compliant with the new 29 CFR Part 1904 OSHA recordkeeping requirements for Federal agencies.

## 2. SAFETY, HEALTH, AND RETURN TO EMPLOYMENT (SHARE) INITIATIVE

### A. PROVIDE A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF YOUR AGENCY'S PROGRESS IN MEETING EACH OF THE FOUR GOALS OF THE PRESIDENT'S SHARE INITIATIVE:

- REDUCE TOTAL INJURY AND ILLNESS CASE RATES BY AT LEAST 3 PERCENT PER YEAR
- REDUCE LOST TIME INJURY AND ILLNESS CASE RATES BY AT LEAST 3 PERCENT PER YEAR
- IMPROVE THE TIMELY FILING OF NOTICES OF INJURY AND ILLNESS BY AT LEAST 5 PERCENT PER YEAR
- REDUCE LOST PRODUCTION DAY RATES DUE TO INJURY AND ILLNESS BY AT LEAST 1 PERCENT PER YEAR

### B. DESCRIBE PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED AND INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY YOUR AGENCY IN SUPPORT OF THE INITIATIVE. DISCUSS THE SUCCESSES OR FAILURES AS A RESULT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES, AND EXPLAIN HOW THEY IMPROVED THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR AGENCY'S OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM.

VA's overarching mission is to provide high quality service and support for our Nation's veterans. In serving veterans, we recognize that a safe and healthful workplace allows VA employees to better meet those obligations. VA's OSH Office has implemented a number of initiatives to identify and abate hazardous procedures and conditions, educate employees and supervisors on safe and healthful work practices, and encourage open communication between labor and management partners.

#### SHARE Initiative Summary for VA

**Goal 1:** Reduce the Total Case Rate (TCR) for most Federal agencies by 3 percent per year, while at the same time increasing the timeliness of reporting new injuries and illnesses to OWCP for each agency by 5 percentage points per year.

Baseline Total Case Rate	FY 2004 Target	FY 2004 Actual
7.65	7.42	7.26

The 5 percent reduction in the TCR exceeds the 3 percent SHARE objective.

Baseline Timeliness %	FY 2004 Target	FY 2004 Actual
67.8%	71.2%	79.0%

Overall, VA organizations exceeded the FY 2004 timeliness goal by 11 percent. (VHA led the all department organizations with an overall FY 2004 timeliness rate of 80.4 percent).

**Goal 2: Reduce the Lost Time Case Rate (LTCR) for those worksites with the highest Federal lost time case rate by 3 percent per year (based on cumulative LTCR of five targeted VAMCs).**

Baseline Lost Time Case Rate	FY 2004 Target	FY 2004 Actual
3.57	3.46	3.30

VA exceeded the FY 2004 LTCR goal by 5 percent.

**Goal 3: Reduce the Lost Production Day Rate (LPDR) (lost days due to injury or illness per 100 employees) by 1 percent per year. These figures are provided by DOL.**

Baseline LPDR	FY 2004 Target	FY 2004 Actual
65.4	64.7	61.4

VA exceeded the FY 2004 LPDR goal by 5 percent.

**Programs Established and Initiatives Launched in Support of the SHARE Initiative:**

VA has established and maintained many initiatives to provide workers and supervisors with appropriate job health and safety awareness and hazard recognition information and training, program assessment, and hazard resolution. These initiatives have a direct impact on the SHARE Initiative goals and are described below.

**VA:**

- VA's WC Program Manager initiated a unique and innovative program for the review of complex emotional reaction claims for WC benefits. Board-certified forensic psychiatrists will conduct case reviews to further develop these types of cases. Emotional reaction claims often deal with work-related stress and are very difficult to manage. This program will have considerable positive impact on the LPDR and save VA millions of current dollars as well as future program obligations.
- VA conducted a WC training program for over 100 managers and supervisors of VAMC Houston, Texas, providing practical direction and information for facility leadership and WC program managers to work together to improve WC claim management and reduce LPDR.
- In cooperation with the Chesapeake Health Education Program, Inc. (CHEP), the 6th Annual Workers' Compensation Conference was held in Washington, DC, from August 3-5, 2004. Over 580 Federal employees attended the 3-day event, a 30 percent increase over last year's attendance. The 51-member faculty of Federal and private sector experts conducted over 44 sessions. Reviews of attendee and faculty evaluations indicated that the conference was very well received and provided excellent instruction not only in WC case management, but also in medical and legal review and safety program management areas. The conference provided an opportunity for VA to support leadership in these program areas to the entire Federal

government WC area; address case management issues that affect LPDR in the SHARE Initiative, promote the formation of professional WC organizations; and strengthen ties to the Office of Federal Workers' Compensation Programs and the Employee Compensation Appeals Board.

#### **VHA:**

- VHA continues to require performance measures and monitors for all VISN Directors.
- The VHA Violence Technical Advisory Group recommended the flagging of potentially assaultive patients. Further analysis recognized the need for threat assessment training to complement flagging with a FY 2004 performance monitor. The Violence Prevention monitor required each VHA facility to implement the Patient Record Flagging software, establish a Disruptive Behavior Committee (DBC) under Senior Clinical Leadership, train members of the DBC on threat assessment, and continue training employees in high-risk occupations and locations. Over 60 percent of those employees have been trained.
- All VISN Directors must report all repeat and willful violations along with a plan on how they will be corrected. These initiatives have created a much greater emphasis on controlling accidents as the measures directly reflect on each Director's performance.
- VHA continues to use the Safety Automated Facility Evaluation (SAFE) package, a comprehensive software program to support compliance with OSHA, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, as an in-house product. This software is a "leading indicator" surveillance system. Initial roll-up of national data is being aligned with the national employee survey to understand and measure systems effectiveness. During FY 2004, the software was reviewed by field advisory groups and updated in OSH Program Administration, JCAHO Environment of Care, Industrial Hygiene, Clinical Occupational Health and Boiler Safety.
- Every three years, each VAMC is subjected to a specialized JCAHO administrative and clinical survey that closely evaluates the safety and health program, as well as the working environment. This accreditation is critical to the operation of VAMCs.
- VHA maintains a VA/Union Partnership and committee to enhance communication and dialogue with employees and their representatives, particularly with regard to safety and health issues. The OSHA/VA/Union Partnership Program Assessment Project indicates the receptivity of VHA to a cooperative and collaborative approach to occupational safety and health. VAMCs continue to work toward strengthening these partnerships. There is union (employee) representation on every VAMC safety committee. All VISNs have developed Network-level safety committees with the union participating as a permanent member. Employee representatives also take part in both internally- and externally-originated VAMC inspections. Conference calls for all Union National Safety Representatives are conducted to discuss issues, announcements and program updates.

- Within VAMCs, the Safety Committee remains the premier decision making body for safety and health issues. Significant issues are continually identified by various services through the information and issue-gathering process and brought to the Committee for assessment and development of recommended resolutions. Recommendations receive final approval by the VAMC director. Each Safety Committee provides continuous oversight of the VAMC's safety and health program. JCAHO surveyors regard the Safety Committee as the most important committee of the VAMC. Written safety performance measures are maintained as a part of position descriptions from top management to rank and file employees.
- VA's Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management continues to support a Strategic Healthcare Group on Occupational and Environmental Health to address clinical safety, as well as the more common operational and environmental safety issues.
- VHA uses aggregated root cause analyses of common injury types as a major initiative to identify broad system contributions to adverse safety events. This includes the implementation of a technology review programs associated with the investigations of blood borne pathogens and patient transfer injuries. On a National level VHA conducts specialized review of events and preparedness. VHA Central Office conducted a review of emergency response and preparedness immediately following the Florida hurricanes, Charley and Frances, with a report to VA's Secretary. Implementation of Emergency Operating Plans ensured sufficient supplies, fuel, equipment, oxygen, as well as, a line of communication with emergency personnel and VHA Central Office.
- VHA continues to improve Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and tuberculosis (TB) programs based on OSHA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regulations and policies with best practices and recommendations of the VHA Working Groups. VHA policy requires the reporting of VA patients with suspect or possible SARS, recommendations for the evaluation and care of patients, isolation and infection control, personal protective equipment, communication and education. New respirator fit testing, training and medical exam protocols were developed for use of disposable masks. A model program for the creation of negative pressure isolation was developed.
- VHA is represented on OSHA's Federal Advisory Committee on Ergonomics. In response to a four-fold increase in clinical upper extremity injuries, VHA conducted a review of ergonomic consequences from related technology applications in six VAMCs. The review identified common problems and provided solutions through the e-mail safety list. Further work is planned for FY 2005.
- VHA is collaborating with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Liberty Mutual to develop a five-element program on slips, trips, and falls. Slips, trips and falls represent 20 percent of VHA workplace injuries. Two facilities completed systematic reviews of their data, to serve as one component of an etiologic (case-control) research study, and to provide a basis for an agency program. A laboratory evaluation and an intervention component are scheduled to understand the results from the etiologic case control study and to implement solutions.

## **VBA:**

- VBA performed preemptive routine safety inspections that allowed potential safety issues to be addressed and corrected prior to creating a significant problem. Safety information was made available to all employees in various formats including bulletin boards, Safety Grams, e-mails and required training sessions. Staff members have received specialized safety training depending on job responsibilities as well as the standard fire safety and prevention of work-related injuries training.
- Employees were instructed to exercise more care in their day-to-day activities. Though there were several VA Regional Offices (VARO) that reported an increase in the number of incidents, the time lost actually decreased. Implementation of the Occupational Health Program staffed with registered medical personnel has provided VBA employees with an opportunity to receive immediate medical advice, thus reducing lost time from the office or potentially spreading airborne germs. The Federal Protective Service (FPS) also provided guidance in safety measures to further safeguard employees.
- VBA met the 5 percent goal established for timely filing of notices of injury and illness during FY 2004. Management commitment and oversight ensured that notices were filed both accurately and timely. Notices were filed within five to ten days after the incident, well within established guidelines. Individual goals established within VBA exceeded the goal established by the President.
- VBA managed to reduce LPDR due to injury and illness by at least 1 percent during FY 2004. Campaigns to inform employees of potential safety issues, walkthrough inspections, and encouraging employees to report potential safety issues before they become a problem, have allowed corrective action to take place prior to an injury occurrence. On-site qualified medical personnel will continue to provide employees with immediate medical advice on job-related injuries or illnesses.
- VBA developed and began implementation of appropriate program policies and procedures in response to special OSHA, OWCP or other Presidential initiatives. For example, current OSHA initiatives include government-wide focus on hazard-control programs related to ergonomics, workplace violence and others as announced. Ergonomic solutions have been a major success in providing much needed information to all employees with special emphasis on the effective selection of chairs, keyboard positioning and lifting. Specialized safety awareness has focused attention on areas that might have otherwise gone unnoticed, such as operating a forklift, handling mail and dealing with walk-in veterans who are ill. The implementation of the Occupational Health Program has been a success by ensuring that medical personnel are available during working hours. Continued experience with the implementation of the SHARE Initiative and associated goals will determine overall long-range success.

## **NCA:**

- The safety and health of all NCA employees is of utmost importance. NCA is fully dedicated to conducting a comprehensive occupational safety and health program to prevent accidents and injuries, and to providing a safe place of employment. In order to

prevent and minimize injuries and/or illnesses to personnel, occupational safety and health concerns are given full consideration in the planning, development, and operation of every program and activity throughout NCA.

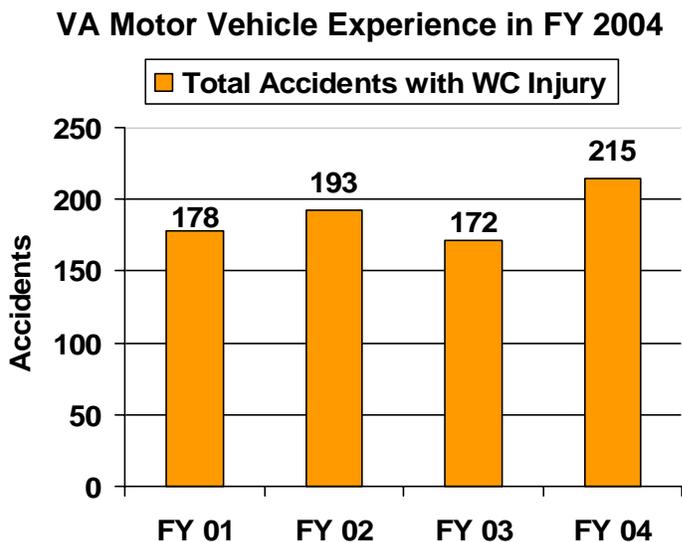
- All NCA employees are encouraged to include safety awareness as part of their daily routine. Every employee must be protected from, and every place of employment free of discrimination, restraint, interference, coercion or reprisal for participating in the NCA's safety and health program. NCA is committed to these principles and expects full support of all employees to achieve a safer and more productive work environment for all.

**Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA):**

- During the past two years, new computers were provided to each BVA employee. These new flat screen personal computers have substantially less glare and reflection and are easier on the eyes. Ergonomic keyboards are provided to all employees upon request without the need for providing medical support documentation.
- BVA continued their participation in the Department of Defense (DoD) Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) during the past year. Two employees were provided with voice-recognition software through the CAP assistive technology program.

**3. MOTOR VEHICLE/SEAT BELT SAFETY**

**A. INCLUDE THE NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS EXPERIENCED BY YOUR AGENCY'S FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES IN FY 2004, WHILE ON OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.**



The data provided is based on workers' compensation claims involving motor vehicles. Data for property loss due to motor vehicle crashes and seat belt usage are not currently available.

**B. INDICATE WHETHER YOUR AGENCY HAS A MECHANISM IN PLACE TO TRACK THE PERCENTAGE OF SEAT BELT USAGE BY EMPLOYEES. IF SO, TELL US HOW YOUR AGENCY TRACKS THIS INFORMATION, THE USAGE PERCENTAGE, AND THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS IN FY 2004 WHO WERE WEARING SEAT BELTS AND THE NUMBER WHO WERE NOT.**

The Departmental data provided above is based on WC claims involving motor vehicles. Collection systems to capture this data are not currently in place and options are being studied. National VHA statistics on facility vehicle accidents and seat belt compliance are not currently available. However, VHA issued a directive on driving requirements for volunteer drivers and medical qualifications.

**C. DESCRIBE IN DETAIL ANY EFFORTS TAKEN BY YOUR AGENCY TO IMPROVE MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY AND SEAT BELT USAGE. SUBMIT COPIES OF ANY INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR AGENCY'S MOTOR VEHICLE/SEAT BELT SAFETY PROGRAMS AND/OR INITIATIVES.**

**VA:**

- VA's OSH Office conducted a national conference education program on motor vehicle safety. Speakers included representatives from DOL's OSHA, DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the National Safety Council.

**VHA:**

- VHA issued an Employee Safety Alert to warn VHA 15-Passenger van drivers of high center of gravity and the propensity of a rollover accident during a sudden driver maneuver. VHA no longer purchases or accept donations of 15-Passenger Vans.
- Motor vehicle accidents are reported on Standard Form 91, Motor Vehicle Accidents. Accident documentation is retained by the facility and forwarded to the General Services Administration (GSA) for GSA vehicles. All employees routinely operating vehicles complete VAMC driver training to include VAMC traffic patterns, safe and defensive driving techniques, driver and passenger safety requirements and mandatory seat belt use.

**VBA:**

VBA reported a total of 39 accidents involving government-owned vehicles. No fatalities were reported. There is currently no mechanism in place to track the percentage of seat belt usage by employees. However, employees traveling on official business in a government vehicle are provided with safety information and the requirement to use seat belts. Most states laws require the use of seat belts or a citation would be issued to the driver. No seat belt citations were written. Specific details are provided below:

- VBA provides safety information to drivers using government cars. An informational binder was created for all GSA vehicles regarding the use of seat belts and other vehicle safety concerns. VARO Chicago, Illinois, provides a copy of the station memorandum entitled "Management and Utilization of Government Vehicles" to all government vehicle drivers. Drivers are reminded of "Executive Order 12566 requiring all federal employees to wear safety belts when driving on official business."
- VARO Salt Lake City, Utah, provides the pamphlet "Your Responsibilities as an Operator of a GSA Fleet Vehicle" to every driver. This pamphlet is reviewed annually and placed in each motor vehicle.

- GSA has started equipping fleet vehicles with a red, dashboard warning light that remains lighted until each passenger is buckled in their respective seat belt.
- VARO Sioux Falls, South Dakota, requires all employees who have the need to drive facility motor vehicles to have their driving record reviewed initially and every three years thereafter through the Department of Transportation's National Driver's Registry. Motor vehicle operators are oriented to motor pool operations and vehicle operating requirements. Circular EC-34, "Passenger Vehicle Operations," outlines motor vehicle operator responsibilities.
- VARO Los Angeles, California, participated in a seat belt survey during FY 2004 in compliance with Executive Order 13043, "Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States," sponsored by DOT.
- VARO Lincoln, Nebraska, requires employees checking out a GSA vehicle for the first time to meet with the Chief, Support Services Division, to review the station circular on "Utilization of Vehicles for Official Travel."

#### **4. TRAINING**

**DESCRIBE YOUR AGENCY'S OVERALL PLAN FOR ASSURING THAT WORKERS, SUPERVISORS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS RECEIVED APPROPRIATE JOB HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARENESS AND HAZARD RECOGNITION INFORMATION AND TRAINING. LIST SPECIFIC TRAINING OFFERED, THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES TRAINED, AND THE NUMBER OF WORKERS AFFECTED BY THE TRAINING. DESCRIBE THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE AGENCY'S TRAINING EFFORTS IN IMPROVING WORK-RELATED SAFETY AND HEALTH.**

#### **VA:**

- The Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and VA continued their partnership with the Workplace Stress and Aggression Project to participate in efforts to identify and mitigate the effects of stress and aggression related to VA – veteran service delivery interface. The program is developing cooperative approaches to education improvements in the VA service delivery interface.
- VA worked with project team members to develop a series of broadcasts dealing with stress and aggression in the workplace. These broadcasts include such titles as "What We Control," and "Learning as a Team," with a focus on understanding workplace dynamics and developing workplace interventions to reduce stress and aggression, and improve employee satisfaction and organizational performance. These programs were broadcast nationally on the VA Knowledge Network (VAKN).
- VA and project team members from VAMC New Orleans, Louisiana, and participating universities launched a third Stress and Aggression Prevention action team to work with a local project staff on developing a structure to manage multiple teams. The Facilities Management Action Team was successful in FY 2004 in reducing not only stress and

aggression, but also equal employment opportunity complaints and visits to employee assistance programs for conflict related issues within their service line.

- National Conference Calls were conducted on:
  - ✓ Infectious Diseases
  - ✓ OSHA's TB Standard
  - ✓ Eye Safety
  - ✓ Motor Vehicle Safety
- A National OSH Conference, sponsored by the unions, was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. Presentations covered the full range of OSHA issues and included OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens Standards, Current Priorities in Occupational Safety and Health, and OSHA's Proposed Recordkeeping Changes (given jointly with a representative of OSHA's Office of Federal Agency Programs). Union planners indicated that they would plan another conference next year.
- VA provided a basic safety presentation to union representatives at the Employee Education System (EES) training site in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Little Rock facility has been selected by EES to provide OSH education services for VA. The program addressed approximately 40 attendees for 4 hours on a number of safety topics, such as elements of a successful safety program.

#### **VHA:**

- The VHA Safety and Health training program emphasizes employee skill and understanding in hazard recognition, standard procedures, best practices and emerging issues. VAMC employees receive initial and annual OSHA compliance training based on job classification and assignments. VHA Central Office supports site-based training via VAKN satellite broadcast, specialized Web-based initiatives, independent study programs, workshops and lecture series. Lastly, VHA provides conference-based training opportunities to promote communication and national initiatives.
- During FY 2004, VHA continued to emphasize mandatory new employee orientation that requires general training on safety and health at each VAMC, and supervisory training that includes a section on safety and health. All facilities perform annual awareness training for employees in the areas of safety, health and security, including hazard recognition. The annual training also includes violence in the workplace.
- Several one-week conferences were provided during 2004. The Infection Control Conference and the Safety and Health Conference attracted over 655 VHA employees. Course offerings include review of technical issues, remediation tools and new directions for VHA programs.
- VHA partners with VA Unions and DOL to coordinate efforts and strengthen VHA's safety and health programs. VHA is committed to a strategy that will fully implement the recommendations in the OSHA Agency Evaluation Report. One of several FY 2004 VHA/Union activities included a highly successful union safety conference. Presentations

and coursework were provided on accident investigation, blood-borne pathogens, ergonomics and use of personal protective equipment for protection from TB and weapons of mass destruction.

- VHA will continue to offer training classes for the union safety representatives and collateral duty staff. The Basic Course provides a review of safety management principles and an overview of VA OSH programs and OSHA regulations and standards. VHA has offered this course for the last seven years, with 40 VHA staff attending in 2004. For those union safety representatives that have obtained significant expertise, VHA and VA's Designated Safety and Health Official (DASHO) developed an "Intermediate Safety for Union Representatives." The Intermediate Union Safety program builds on information obtained from the Basic Safety for Union Representatives course. It updates union safety representative on the latest changes in application of the safety standards for VAMC Health Care Facilities. The 2004 attendees (44) were provided advanced information to assist them with their responsibilities as local union safety representatives.
- Several nationwide courses were provided on the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101), Emergency Power Systems (NFPA 110), National Electrical Code (NFPA 70), Healthcare Facilities (NFPA 99) and National Fire Alarm Code (NFPA 72). VAMC safety and engineering staff reviewed code requirements to reduce employee and patient injuries and facility damage associated with improper program and systems management. A total of 655 employees participated in these training programs.
- A course of Basic Safety, Fire Protection and Industrial Hygiene was available for all VHA Safety and Health employees. All VHA employees have site-based access to Safety and Health VAKN satellite broadcasts. During 2004, 59 broadcasts were provided on the following topics:
 

Accident Investigation	Asbestos Awareness	Indoor Air Quality
Slips, Trips & Falls	Back Safety	Forklift & Trucks
Blood Borne Pathogens	Driver Safety	Ergonomics
Electrical Safety	Computer Stations	Hearing Conservation
Emergency Planning	Eye Safety	Hand & Finger Safety
Fall Prevention	Fire Prevention	First Aid
- The WC Lecture Series (11 sessions) provided knowledge that will increase the level of staff competence in the WC field. Lectures were provided via audio/video conferencing and included topics on ASISTS Graphic User Interface, Record Systems and Coding, Performance Monitors and COP. A total of 2,879 VHA employees attended the lectures.
- A Clinical Threat Management conference call series discussed clinical issues related to violence threat assessment and management. This call targeted individuals working in VAMCs that are members of their facility Disruptive Behavior Committee and involved in threat assessment and management.

## VBA:

VBA has provided numerous training opportunities, voluntary and mandatory, to all employees in an effort to educate and provide an understanding of the fundamentals in attaining a safe and healthy work environment. Recognition of potential hazards continues to be a primary goal. During FY 2004, VBA continued to emphasize mandatory training requirements for both new and existing employees.

- VBA provides annual training on the proper handling and use of hazardous materials. Guidance is also provided on how to deal with a spill and on proper placement of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). Annual fire and safety training is provided to all employees. VBA has also provided specialized forklift training, motorized cart training, x-ray machine training, and magnetometer training for employees operating those machines.
- VBA has provided training and brochures on the following issues: Preventing Violence in the Workplace, Fitness at the Terminal, Lifting and Carrying, The American With Disabilities Act (ADA) and You, Putting Ergonomics To Work for You. These employee training programs were offered to bring a new awareness to these subjects. All new employees have attended this training as part of their orientation process. Ergonomic training is provided in various forums to all employees. Specific Prevention and Management of Disruptive Behavior (PMDB) training was attended by 76 employees who have direct public contact. Specialized training has been provided in selected areas covering severe weather including a specialized tornado drill. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Training was provided to over 200 employees.

Specialized training was provided by selected VAROs based on individual requirements.

- Three committee members (Human Resources Liaison, VARO Safety Officer and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Safety and Health Representative) from VARO San Juan, Puerto Rico, attended a 4-day course (OSHA Collateral Duty) sponsored by the Atlantic OSHA Training Center.
- VARO Salt Lake City, Utah, provides online ergonomics training to all employees as well as an online office safety course. This Website accessible safety course located at [www.pp.okstate.edu](http://www.pp.okstate.edu) provides training on everything from avoiding slips and falls to lifting and exercising.
- Safety reminders from the VARO Portland, Oregon Safety Officer are presented during weekly staff meetings. Health and safety topics from seatbelt requirements to proper ergonomic practices are part of an on-going program to keep health and safety at the forefront of every manager's outlook. Every manager shares safety and health information with employees.
- VARO Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has produced a monthly *OSH Safety Gram* that is reviewed by all employees.

- VARO's New York, New York, WC specialist attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Federal Workers' Compensation Conference in August 2004. All administrative employees have been trained on the use of the newly acquired mail x-ray scanner to detect hazards that may enter the VARO from outside sources. All mail and packages sent to the VARO are delivered to the Support Services mailroom to be scanned before delivery to any area within the VARO.
- VARO Winston Salem, North Carolina, trained 12 employees in basic first aid, proper use of AED machines and CPR. The station's human resource department organized an employee health fair. Agencies outside VA (American Heart Association, Forsyth County Health Department, Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, Forsyth County Extension Service, American Cancer Society and Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Education Service) were invited to provide cholesterol/blood sugar screenings and health awareness information to the employees. A Weight Watchers class was conducted once a week for three months during the employees' lunch break. Twenty-six employees participated in the program. The Forsyth County Health Department was invited to hold a flu shot clinic at the VARO Winston Salem. Approximately 41 employees received vaccinations. The station's training coordinator conducted "Industrial Ergonomics" training to 18 file clerks detailing proper lifting techniques.
- VARO Milwaukee, Wisconsin, trained nine members of the Medical Response Team in CPR and AED training. Approximately 24 management and supervisory staff attended Violence in the Workplace Training.
- The California Highway Patrol provided VARO Oakland, California, government vehicle drivers with specialized motor vehicle operation training.
- VARO Wichita, Kansas, conducted specialized training in the proper usage of a Fire extinguisher; 57 employees attended.
- VARO Indianapolis, Indiana, invited the Indiana Federal Safety and Health Council to attend bi-monthly meetings. Guest speakers provided valuable information on general safety with one meeting dedicated to specific OSHA and OWCP issues. GSA presented information on the Federal Adam Alert concerning missing children in federal buildings. The FPS explained security upgrades, additional security cameras, and upgrades in day care security.
- VARO Atlanta, Georgia, in coordination with VAMC Atlanta, Georgia, provided drivers of GSA vehicles with the quarterly Defensive Driving Course; five employees completed the training.
- VARO Los Angeles, California, participated in a seat belt survey in compliance with Executive Order 13043, "Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States," sponsored by DOT.
- VARO St. Petersburg, Florida, sponsors an Emergency Employee Response Team (EMERT) comprised of volunteer employees. The majority of the team is comprised of employees with medical expertise, (i.e., Nurses, Emergency Medical Technicians), which

respond to workplace emergencies. These employees are provided refresher training for First Aid, CPR, and AED use.

- VARO Roanoke, Virginia, posts Web-based training links providing instruction to employees on winter driving and business travel safety tips. All government vehicle drivers are provided a handout containing safety reminders.
- VARO Lincoln, Nebraska, a Safety Engineer from VAMC Omaha, and a representative from DOL, gave a presentation on general office safety issues; 30 employees from the office attended the training. Twenty-two drivers of GSA vehicles viewed the “Modern Driving Hazards” video, provided by GSA. The video contained information on how to handle “road rage.”
- VARO Togus, Maine, provided infection control training specific to the VARO work environment for all employees. Training provided staff with ideas on how to reduce the spread of illness throughout the office. As part of this training, no-rinse antiseptic hand cleansing gel dispensers were placed in high volume traffic areas so employees could sanitize their hands after contact with doorknobs, shaking hands, and anywhere viruses and bacteria might be hiding. Employees were also provided ideas on how to reduce the risk of becoming sick when dealing with veterans who are ill.

#### **NCA:**

- NCA’s acting incumbent senior safety professional and the training and education specialists are expected to continue the national safety training program.
- The equipment operator safety program (i.e., Caterpillar training) will continue for all field equipment operators.
- In FY 2004, NCA completed its first annual equipment operator safety program and utilization of the monthly safety themes, to further promote safety awareness.

#### **Veterans Canteen Service (VCS):**

In FY 2004 the VCS Central Office identified and eliminated the major causes of repetitive stress injuries at VACO. This included modification to employee workstations, and providing ergonomically correct equipment. In addition, on a monthly basis the VCS Central Office updated the OSHA Web site with very pointed safety messages to canteens nationwide. These safety messages provided tips on various safety issues, and were divided into two categories – one safety and the other common sense. Topics for safety included: automobile and driving safety; avoiding eye strain; cold weather safety; stress signals; hearing safety; latex allergies; managing off-duty and weekend injuries; preventing hand/wrist injuries; spotting and preventing crimes; and dry hands. Topics for common sense included: food/drugs to avoid; cell phone safety; identity theft; violence in the workplace; street and stranger smarts; 10 warning signs of domestic violence; kicking smoking habit; diabetes information; safeguarding information; and holiday safety.

- During FY 2004, WC and safety training was conducted at the VCS Central Office for approximately 34 canteen managers.

## **5. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**A. DESCRIBE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED IN FY 2004 TO CONTROL THE TRENDS AND MAJOR CAUSES OR SOURCES OF FATALITIES AND LOST TIME DISABILITIES IN YOUR AGENCY, AND TO IMPROVE YOUR AGENCY'S OVERALL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM. DISCUSS YOUR SUCCESSES AND/OR FAILURES AS A RESULT OF YOUR AGENCY'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE INITIATIVES. ATTACH A COPY OF ANY SIGNIFICANT OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH POLICY OR PROCLAMATION RELATED TO THESE INITIATIVES.**

**B. IN DESCRIBING YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INITIATIVES, PLEASE TRY TO EXPLAIN YOUR AGENCY'S EFFORTS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

- **ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR AGENCY'S OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM.**
- **ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND RESOLUTION OF SAFETY AND HEALTH PROBLEMS, INCLUDING YOUR AGENCY'S SYSTEM OF (A) PROVIDING RECOGNITION TO OUTSTANDING ACHIEVERS AND (B) ESTABLISHING ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYEES.**
- **UNIQUE OR SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT YOUR AGENCY MADE IN FY 2004 TO ENHANCE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION, INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION IN THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM.**

### **VA:**

- On January 27, 2004, VA and VHA OSH Program Managers were among the recipients of VA's Partnership Award in recognition of mutual efforts to improve safety within VA and service to our nation's veterans. The ceremony was held at the Madison Hotel in Washington, DC.
- VA expanded the DoD CAPS Program partnership with VA to facilitate return to work of the more seriously disabled employees within VA. CAPS is a program that was funded by Congress to provide assistive technology, free of charge, to Federal agencies to accommodate disabled employees and applicants in keeping with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Within the first day of the program's activation, over 26 cases were identified.
- On June 10, 2004, the Telly Awards organization presented the VA's Workplace Stress and Aggression Project Team three first place and two runners up Telly Awards for Best Video Productions. The Telly Awards recognizes outstanding video productions. VA's Workplace Stress and Aggression Project Team, sponsored by VA's OSH Office, is a collaborative group of VA managers, employees, and employee Union officials drawn from all three administrations and university researchers from four educational institutions.

- VA's OSH Web site upgrade project continued to provide enhanced access and information to users.
- According to Webtrends, VA's OSH Office VASAFETY Web page had an increase of visitors. In August 2004, the total of intranet and internet use was 80,530 pages viewed by 7,707 unique visitors, which is an increase from July's total of intranet and internet use of 64,947 pages viewed by 6,815 unique visitors. The VASAFETY Web page contains OSH announcements, news (e.g., OSHA letter concerning fit-testing for respirators), educational materials, directives, handbooks, and links. VA's OSH Office encouraged VA organizations to have safety Web pages and provided assistance to interested VA organizations. VASAFETY receives unsolicited complements from the field.
- VA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a follow-up audit report on VA's WC program cost. The audit follows-up the 1998 OIG report on WC issued in July 1998. A unified Steering Committee was established to develop a joint action plan for implementation next fiscal year.
- During the reporting period, VA's OSH Office responded to a number of employee concerns, including: WC claim management, employee overexposure to the sun; and exposure to asbestos, radiation, blood borne pathogens, lifting, and respiratory hazards. These issues will be addressed in next year's report.

#### **VHA:**

- Annual Workplace Evaluations (AWE) were performed in FY 2004 at VAMCs by VISN staff. Deficiencies were identified and programs were re-evaluated. The findings and abatement plans are tracked and discussed with top management of the VAMCs. An annual survey by the Healthcare Analysis Information Group (HAIG) tracks and verifies completion of AWE surveys. In addition to compliance with core OSHA injury and illness reporting requirements, HAIG tracks VHA standard procedures and Union participation. The HAIG survey identifies future OSH issues requiring further attention, as well as documenting achievements. VAMC senior management, safety staff, and union officials complete this survey. A dedicated Task Group develops and reviews the survey and identifies weaknesses and strengths for each VISN. Recommended improvements were submitted to all VISN Directors during FY 2004.
- VHA's VAMC Decontamination Task Force selected 52 VAMCs to receive funding, support and training for mass-casualty decontamination resulting from the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. Train-the-trainer decontamination training classes (12) were provided during FY 2004 (340 employees). Topics included decontamination assessment, installations and personal protective equipment. Internal and external surveys were conducted.
- VHA worked with OSHA, the Soldiers' Biological and Chemical Command (SBC-COM), and academic scientists to develop and publicize operational strategies likely to occur during mass destruction terrorist incidents. The collaboration provided two guidance documents, *"Weapons of mass destruction in healthcare facilities: personal protective equipment, site operations planning, training, and medical programs"* and *"Planning for*

*Hospital Emergency Mass-Casualty Decontamination by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.*” These were incorporated into OSHA’s “First Receiver” document and published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature.

- VHA finalized a National Occupational Safety and Health Policy in FY 2004 (VHA 7701 Directive and Handbook 7701.1). The policy requires accident and injury reporting requirements to comply with VA policies and OSHA regulations. VISNs developed written programs to ensure VAMCs were in compliance. VHA mandates all facilities conduct accident review boards to understand underlying causes of injury. The VISN programs were reviewed by VHA Central Office staff and National Union Council representatives.

#### **VBA:**

VBA recognizes the following accomplishments and continues to monitor progress as reported by the Director of each VARO. Accomplishments reported reflect the overall commitment to providing a safe and healthy work environment regardless of VARO size or number of employees.

- An OSH Inspection was performed in various VAROs during this reporting period by an Industrial Hygienist. There were no substantial non-compliance issues identified during this inspection although several power strip infractions were noted. There were no tripping injuries resulting from electrical cords or injuries resulting from unsafe file cabinets. A film was obtained from VHA that detailed the correct use of power strips. A follow-up safety survey was initiated to make sure employees continued to use power strips properly.
- VBA has ensured that key safety team personnel conduct safety, fire and workplace inspections. Inspection teams are comprised of Safety and Fire personnel, management and non-management personnel. The inspection identifies safety hazards, health hazards, fire hazards, as well as inadequate conditions of cleanliness and general housekeeping. These inspections occur on various intervals depending on the VARO. Most inspections occur on a quarterly basis although some occur as frequently as monthly. These inspections are made to determine compliance with safety standards and to identify unsafe conditions. The inspections also assess the effectiveness of the OSH program. Progress was evaluated to ensure timeliness in the resolution of safety issues raised during the scheduled safety reviews.
- VBA has tasked Safety Officers with the responsibility of ensuring that safety practices are consistently followed. A close working relationship with AFGE Union Representatives has been established. VBA has also initiated external safety inspections conducted with VHA safety inspectors. A union representative also performs a major role in the VARO’s safety program. The relationship between respective VAROs and the union has resulted in overall employee safety awareness. All changes to the work environment are presented to the union prior to any implementation and then are shared with employees.

- VBA provides clear signage to alert employees of potential safety hazards and works with the Federal Building Management team to expedite resolution of any safety hazards encountered. VBA ensures safety posters; bulletins and publications are exhibited throughout each facility.
- VBA has offered training in CPR and the use of the AED. All employees and visitors have benefited from the training offered.
- VBA has provided ergonomic solutions and associated information to all employees.
- Semi-annual building evacuation drills were conducted with all employees. After action meetings were held with all floor wardens and monitors to critique the event. Feedback and recommendations for changes were received and incorporated into the plan.
- Quarterly air samples were collected from VARO Buffalo, New York, and analyzed by GSA to monitor potential building asbestos that may have been present as a result of previous fire retardant spraying. The reports showed levels were below minimum standards. Air quality samples were taken from basement file rooms at VARO Portland, Oregon. It was determined that basement file rooms need added ventilation. The report recommended that employees should not be permanently assigned to these basement rooms. Action was taken to move the most frequently used files to storage space on other floors. No employees are currently working full-time in the basement.
- VBA has implemented the Occupational Health Program as outlined in Circular HR-25, "Occupational Health Services." The program is fully staffed with one registered nurse and one licensed practical nurse.
- VARO Hartford, Connecticut, purchased Herman Miller Aeron posture fit support chairs for all employees. They also purchased new x-ray and magnometer security equipment for the VA Police to utilize while screening visitors. A magnetic card swipe system was also installed along with security cameras in high usage access ways.
- VARO Houston, Texas, installed Americans with Disabilities Act compliant push button pads on interior corridor doors to create a barrier free environment for wheelchair employees. Each workstation is configured to accommodate handicapped employees. All modular systems furniture and chairs are checked for ergonomic features prior to ordering in an effort to eliminate painful cumulative trauma disorders (CTD's).
- VARO Jackson, Mississippi, ensured appropriate building repairs were completed in respective VAROs as required and upgraded the Fire Safety System. This involved moving sprinkler heads to locations that recently completed a remodeling effort. Other improvements included stairwell and loading dock upgrades to a non-skid surface.
- VBA ensures that fire extinguishers are monitored on a regular basis.
- VARO Manchester, New Hampshire, encountered a water leak that presented a potential environmental hazard. The area was professionally cleaned and then checked for contaminants by a professional industrial Hygienist. No residual hazards were identified.

- VBA has advised and encouraged all employees to be proactive in hazard prevention by reporting unsafe and/or unhealthful working conditions.
- VBA has acquired and maintains protective safety equipment (eye goggles, rubber gloves, safety back belts, etc.) reasonably necessary to protect employees in the execution of job related duties. VBA purchased Safe-T-Lift occupational back supports for those employees who have to periodically lift heavy items. These employees wear the back supports as needed and none of the reported injuries during FY 2004 were from these employees or related to their lifting heavy items.
- VBA has fostered a close working relationship between leadership staff, GSA, FPS, and other building tenants. Communications with GSA and the FPS have improved with the capability to contact these “key” officials 24/7. Routine reports and potential safety issues are provided to upper level managers during all phases of building related issues. Potential hazardous conditions are reported quickly and action is taken to eliminate the hazard and prevent an accident from occurring.
- VBA has ensured that freestanding, metal shelving in a busy workplace, which posed a potential hazard in case of an earthquake, was removed.
- VARO San Juan, Puerto Rico, utilizes the VAMC Certified Safety Engineer for annual inspections of all areas of the VARO. These inspections are independent of those performed annually by OSHA for all GSA facilities. The VARO Safety Officer is an active participant of the Puerto Rico Federal Safety and Health Council, which is sponsored by OSHA.
- VARO Roanoke, Virginia, worked with GSA to ensure building elevators were renovated. The upgrade included improvement to the door closing detection mechanism that has reduced injuries resulting from elevator doors closing on employees.
- VARO Waco, Texas, procured 253 file cabinets to replace broken cabinets in the files area. This replacement will alleviate back, arm, and shoulder problems in trying to open difficult-to-open cabinets.
- VARO Waco, Texas, also coordinated with the Central Texas Veterans Health Care Center to provide flu vaccinations to employees. Hazardous waste containers were installed at the VARO for safe disposal of needles. This installation eliminates the risk of needles in wastebaskets.

**NCA:**

- NCA continues to collaborate with VHA for continued support with field audits and inspections.
- In FY 2004, NCA identified the need for safety standards to accurately assess program and personnel standards. The Administration also recognizes the requirement of a safety organizational assessment.

- In FY 2004, NCA initiated and incorporated a program of personnel performance standards. Additionally, NCA will assess its organizational structure with respect to its safety mission.

**VCS:**

- Although total chargeback costs increased for FY 2004, compensation payments actually decreased by 0.2 percent.

**6. RESOURCES**

**EXPLAIN ANY SIGNIFICANT ONE TIME OR ADDITIONAL PERMANENT RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM IN FY 2004 FOR AREAS SUCH AS WORKPLACE HAZARD ABATEMENT, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, DATA SYSTEMS, STAFFING, AND TRAINING.**

**VA:**

- VA's OSH Web page established a new safety information page for NCA. This new page is now fully functional, and will continue to be refined to encompass more information as it is made available from the remaining Memorial Service Networks (MSN).

**VHA:**

- The VA Technical Career Field Trainee Program is a 2-year training program for Graduate Engineers, OSH Specialists and Industrial Hygienists. During FY 2004, the program hired eight Industrial Hygienists/Safety Specialists. The candidates are trained and mentored at VAMCs. After successful completion of the 2-year program, the trainees will acquire career conditional status and will qualify to work in any of the VAMCs.
- The Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) was enhanced with two additional core staff to improve the occupational safety programs within VHA. A Fire Department Program Manager will provide inspection, technical assistance, and written evaluations of fire suppression programs for all VHA facilities that operate in-house Fire Departments. A Decontamination Program Manager will ensure the coordination of national training and exercises for emergency preparedness.
- The CEOSH continues to expand its presence on the Intranet with a redesigned Web portal to provide support information in general safety, OWCP, Fire Safety, Industrial Hygiene, and Environmental Compliance. The CEOSH site has proven a valuable information resource as illustrated by the increased number of users during FY 2004 Healthcare Analysis and Information Group survey. A "Safety Challenge" feature was added to the CEOSH Web site. Visitors are asked to identify occupational hazards by viewing photographs of VAMC settings. The hazards are then identified with an OSHA reference. The Web site is available to all VA employees.

**VBA:**

Most VBA Safety Officers perform OSH responsibilities as a collateral duty, although resources are made available to address specific issues when needed. Several VAROs

have partnered with local VAMCs and directly participate in the VAMC's OSH program including walkthroughs and training.

- VARO New Orleans, Louisiana, purchased three AED devices to assist in the care of individuals who suffer cardiac arrest at the regional office. The VARO also expended separate funds to rebalance the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system in order to improve air quality, and provided a Public Address System to expedite timely information of any health or safety issues present in the workplace.
- VARO Montgomery, Alabama, has established an Installation Safety and Occupational Health Committee, chaired by the Assistant Director, and staffed by employees from both management and the union.
- VARO Milwaukee, Wisconsin, purchased protective eye and ear gear as well as back braces for the use of the publication and mailroom staff when doing shredding jobs and handling large volumes of mail.
- VARO Oakland, California, installed an extensive 63-point duress alarm system. The system is wired to the FPS's Mega Dispatch Center in Denver, Colorado; the Guard Station within our building; and an enunciator panel just outside the office of the Station Safety Officer. Activation of an alarm brings the immediate dispatch of a team of Federal Law Enforcement Officers to the scene of the activation.
- GSA is renovating VARO Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is housed in the William S. Moorhead Federal Building. This renovation will include an asbestos abatement. The move is to be completed by FY 2007.
- VARO St. Petersburg, Florida, painted all curbing yellow to ensure that employees and visitors could identify the "drop area." The VARO also did the following: eliminated tripping hazards such as broken tiles/thresholds; provided additional lighting and exit signs; installed security cameras on the roof to provide additional protection and security for employees; and installed shutters on all the windows to keep glass from breaking during inclement weather.
- VARO Waco, Texas, committed needed resources to procure hazardous waste containers.
- VARO Roanoke, Virginia, acquired and renovated an additional 9,500 square feet of office space in the Poff Federal Building. The design layout of this new office space included improved lighting, ventilation, and new carpet throughout.

#### **NCA:**

- In FY 2004, NCA recruited a senior safety professional to serve as the Special Assistant for Occupational Safety, Health and the Environment to the Under Secretary for Memorial

Affairs. The establishment and empowerment of this position reflects the Administration's commitment to enhancing workplace and employee safety. The position was vacated in 2004 but will be filled in a timely manner.

- Additionally, NCA recruited two professional training and education specialists and will announce a WC program manager in FY 2004. The training and education positions will enhance the Administration's ability to implement a robust safety training program, and the addition of a WC position will improve the Administration's data collection, trends analysis and accident/injury reduction efforts.
- In FY 2004, NCA committed \$4.97 million to capital improvement and/or new construction projects. Projects designed to enhance/remediate workplace and employee safety and health received priority funding, further exemplifying the Administration's commitment to its safety and health program.
- In FY 2004, NCA continued to expand and commit the resources needed to ensure a resilient and respected safety program. NCA has deployed a national safety and health training program, enhanced safety information management resources (i.e., Caterpillar training, foremen training, etc.), and integrated employee incentives (i.e., Safety Awards Program).

## **7. GOALS**

### **IDENTIFY YOUR ANNUAL OSH PLANS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND SIGNIFICANT OSH INITIATIVES PLANNED AND PROGRAMMED FOR FY 2005 AND BEYOND, INCLUDING YOUR AGENCY'S FY 2006 PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR EACH OF THE FOUR GOALS UNDER THE SHARE INITIATIVE.**

#### **VA:**

The overall plan for VA's OSH Office is to continue to support and oversee the development and operation of effective VA OSH programs. Several initiatives are planned to enhance VA's ability to educate and inform employees and supervisors, recognize OSH issues, and to develop goals that reduce or eliminate the severity of adverse outcomes. These goals include:

- Supporting efforts to identify, assess, and resolve OSH problems and support the SHARE Initiative to improve OSH program operations on behalf of VA's Secretary. Providing basic requirements for VA organizations that support overall DOL goals. Elements of the Secretary's goals included presidential goals for the reduction of LTCR, improvement of claim submission timeliness, and program improvement items such as development of violence prevention programs.
- Continuing development of training materials and new delivery modes, including CD-ROM, Internet and satellite programs in cooperation with VHA's Employee Education Service, and implementation of the OSHA recordkeeping standards under 29 CFR Part 1904.

- Fostering and sponsoring intra- and inter-agency projects to enhance the delivery and effectiveness of VA's OSH programs.
- Tracking and analyzing the performance of each VA administration, including motor vehicle accidents and seat belt usage.
- Development written policies and plans for comprehensive hazard prevention programs as applicable to each organization in response to special OSHA, OWCP, or other Presidential initiatives.
- Ensure that at least one facility OSH official/manager attends an OSH-related training opportunity.
- Complete the Job Hazard Analysis for high-risk occupations based on OSHA guidelines.
- Continue to encourage the development of VHA, VBA, and NCA OSH Program policy documents to further implement VA Directive 7700. These policy documents are intended to enhance program commitment, provide OSH program documentation at operational levels, and provide more specific program guidance.

#### **VHA:**

- There is emphasis on upgrading the SAFE package to standardize facility evaluations through the use of uniform criteria. Through a strong program of deficiency identification and decisive abatement, the potential for accidents is reduced. During FY 2005, the SAFE program will migrate to an updated software package to enable advanced data analysis and storage.
- An on-line Supervisor Safety course will be mandatory during FY 2005 for all VHA supervisors. Supervisors will be informed of their responsibility and role in recognizing, communicating and correcting occupational hazards. Supervisors will also be instructed on actions to be taken in the event of employee injuries, including completion of mandatory injury forms and implementation of employee return-to-work program.
- A Construction Safety training course and guidebook are scheduled for FY 2005, which will focus on decreasing worker injuries and illnesses in construction activities. The course will inform construction managers and workers of responsibilities, hazards and applicable OSHA standards.
- A Respiratory Protection course will be delivered in March 2005 with OSHA participation. The course will enable VAMC program administrators to develop and implement an effective Respiratory Protection Program. Implementation of effective programs is intended to protect employees from occupational respiratory hazards.
- VHA has developed several programs to respond to threats associated with terrorism, including decontamination and personal protective device usage, bioterrorism (smallpox, anthrax) and clinician cognitive aids (pocket cards for chemical, biological, and nuclear agents). VHA's Medical Center Decontamination Task Force will conduct a needs

assessment survey of additional facilities for support and training during mass-casualty decontamination resulting from the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. Decontamination training and protective equipment will be provided for additional facilities entering the program.

- VHA continues quarterly conference calls for all Union safety representatives at the national and facility levels. Topics and speakers will be selected by the National Union Safety representatives.
- VHA continues to extract inspection data from the OSHA National database and distribute to each VHA VISN on a quarterly basis for assessment and improvement of Network programs.
- VHA will complete a report and recommendations on bloodborne pathogens injuries and timeliness of treatment in post-exposure prophylaxis to improve the quality of delivered care.
- VHA will complete a report and recommendations on back pain management using the DoD/VA Clinical Practice Guideline to improve the quality of delivered care. VHA will also be rolling out its patient transfer injury prevention program as a national initiative.
- VHA will rollout a national mold and moisture response program. The program will emphasize pre-lease inspections of building systems, recognition and repair of building faults causing high moisture environments, assessment of mold hazards and mitigation in patient care environments

#### **VBA:**

VBA is committed to exceeding the goals established by the President in the area of safety and awareness in the workplace. Training programs will continue to be offered in both mandatory and voluntary sessions. An awards program for outstanding achievers in safety and health will be actively implemented.

- VBA will continue to conduct fire and safety drills throughout the year and will ensure representatives attend quarterly or semi-annual meetings with evacuation floor monitors to discuss and improve any noted deficiencies. Appropriate safety personnel will remain in close contact with GSA to remain informed of any future available safety or training initiatives.
- VBA will conduct additional in-depth inspections and take aggressive action on items that require immediate attention.
- VBA will continue to strive for an excellent safety and health program thus providing a safe and healthy work environment for employees. SHARE initiatives for FY 2005 and FY 2006 will focus on reducing injuries, illnesses, late reporting and lost production work time.

- VARO New Orleans, Louisiana, will initiate a program that addresses accountability by employees and their supervisors for motor vehicle/seat belt safety. A directive of procedures will be established to ensure that all employees are aware of the regulations established by the local circular and understand and accept the conditions. Training on the provisions of this circular will be implemented on an annual basis to refresh all eligible employees.
- VBA will ensure the implementation of a hazardous waste training program be implemented for all mailroom and reproduction employees and any other employees who may come in contact with life-threatening substances. A listing of approved products will be routed to each employee.
- MSDSs will be displayed on all storage units housing supplies such as inks, cleansers, toners, and ink cartridges showing hazardous contents.
- VBA will ensure newly purchased furniture will be ergonomically correct and expand ergonomic training for all employees. Special emphasis will be provided to determine the correct height for monitors to prevent eye, neck, and shoulder injuries and strains.
- VBA will encourage employees to perform ergonomic exercises at the workstation. The exercises are designed to help prevent the following:
  - (1) Eye strain due to excessive computer use;
  - (2) Hand, wrist, and arm calisthenics to prevent repetitive strain injury/carpal tunnel syndrome;
  - (3) Neck and shoulder calisthenics to prevent repetitive strain injury/carpal tunnel syndrome and neck and shoulder strain.
- VARO New Orleans, Louisiana, will request assistance of a health and safety physical therapist from the VAMC to provide to perform a training session for all employees. This session will be taped and made available for future use in the regional office.
- VARO Montgomery, Alabama, will fill the position of Safety Specialist and improve Safety Training program by offering more frequent training to employees.
- VARO Winston Salem, North Carolina, will revise the Occupant Emergency Plan and train all employees on its contents to ensure smooth evacuation procedures and to improve the timely filing of notices of injury and illness fewer than five days.
- VBA plans to take a more proactive safety role, to include employees from other agencies sharing the same building, when VBA is the lead federal agency.
- VARO Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is developing an additional badge card that all employees will be required to carry at all times which will provide critical instructions on responding to emergency situations.

- VBA will continue to work with employees during rehabilitation periods after an accident or health crisis, to enable those employees to return to work more quickly. VBA will make an alternate worksite available, or assign alternate duties.
- VBA will provide for prompt abatement of unsafe or unhealthful working conditions, including those involving equipment. Moreover, VBA will provide for prompt attention to reports by employees or others of unsafe or unhealthful working conditions.
- VBA will coordinate with national safety organizations and other Federal agencies in activities of mutual interest with the intention of enhancing overall program effectiveness.
- VARO St. Petersburg, Florida, will begin a campaign “Stay Alive in 2005” by sending out electronic safety information to employees on a monthly basis.
- VARO Togus, Maine, plans to participate in a terrorist drill, and use the lessons learned from the FY 2004 drill, in the disaster recovery plan.
- VARO Atlanta, Georgia, plans to coordinate with VAMC Atlanta to schedule VARO drivers of GSA vehicles to take the quarterly Defensive Driving Course.

#### **NCA:**

- National standard operating procedures for safe field operations will be drafted for the Administration’s 120 cemeteries and soldiers’ lot sites. NCA also expects to strengthen its safety performance and trends analysis using its historical workman’s compensation and accident/injury reporting data.

#### **VCS:**

- VCS plans to expand use of the OSHA Web site by managers for training purposes.
- VCS will continue efforts to contain WC costs.
- For FY 2004, the VCS plans to focus our training efforts on the top two injuries – lifting and falls. Our statistics show these two categories make up 49 percent of our total injuries. Lifting was 26 percent of total injuries and falls was 23 percent of total injuries.

#### **ADDENDUM: COMMENTS TO OSHA**

NCA requests that OSHA’s Office of Federal Program consider the following when providing customer support and compliance assistance to Federal agencies:

- Identify Federal safety themes and topics. Safety topics currently on the OSHA Website address issues facing those in private industry.
- Provide compliance assistance to Federal agencies. OSHA’s current compliance assistance program is, once again, geared toward private industry. The Federal

Government's mission is broad and diversified, thereby intensifying the need for tailored, on-site assistance. Procedures that apply to the Federal Aviation Administration, for example, vastly differ from those needed for NCA. Missions significantly vary even within a single department. Safety operations for VHA, for example, differ greatly from those of NCA. Both Administrations, however, organizationally "belong" to VA.

- Host national conferences for Federal agencies to: a) broadcast Presidential, OSHA and OWCP initiatives; b) establish a cadre of Federal safety professionals; and c) facilitate networking and frequent information exchanges.