

OSHA CHALLENGE IN REGION II

By Paul Kniskern, Safety Director, Curtis Lumber

On December 8, the Region II OSHA Challenge Program held a celebration lunch, for participants, company owners, VPP & OSHA dignitaries.

The Region II OSHA Challenge Program started in November 2004, when 30 participants attended training meetings every three weeks. During the period from November 2004 through December 2005, 19 half day training sessions were conducted. From the original 30 companies that attended training, 19 submitted participant paperwork and were accepted into the OSHA pilot.

Curtis Lumber Company sponsored a group-mentoring project at their site in Ballston Spa, NY, starting in July 2003. Mentoring meetings were conducted on a monthly basis for about a year. The idea was formed by local VPP companies who wanted to develop a better way to mentor that would facilitate the sharing of experiences from multiple VPP sites to many local companies. The goals of the group-mentoring project were to mentor local sites into VPP, provide training, and promote education and professional development of participants.

The December meeting celebrated the finalization of training meetings and moving the program forward towards completing individual Challenge stages. Currently nine sites have completed stage 1, 2 or 3 stage requirements.

The lunch, held at Curtis Lumber Co. in Ballston Spa, was attended by all 19 participant companies and the seven coordinators, along with R. Davis Layne the Executive Director of the Voluntary Protection Program Participants

Association, Norman Deitch the Voluntary Protection Program Manager for Region II (OSHA), Brian Bennett the Chairperson of the Region II Chapter of the VPPPA, John Tomich, Retiring Albany Area - OSHA Director, Edward Jerome, Albany Area - OSHA Director.

Current participating Companies in the Region II Challenge Program

- Occupational & Environmental Health Center of Eastern, NY
- Copeland Coating, Nassau, NY
- Ace Hardware Corporation, Gansevoort, NY
- NorAm Pac Inc. Schenectady, NY
- DeCrescente Distributing Co., Inc. Mechanicville, NY
- International Paper - Ticonderoga, NY
- Power Pallet, Schenectady, NY
- Schonbeck, Plattsburg, NY
- Glens Falls Hospital, Glens Falls, NY
- Ellsworth Ice Cream Co., Inc. Saratoga Springs, NY
- Taconic Farms, Inc. Germantown, NY
- Northeast Panel & Truss Kingston, NY
- Saratoga Lumber Traders, Ballston Spa, NY
- NRLA, East Greenbush, NY
- Pentagon Technologies, Inc, Fish Kill, NY
- Cascades Tissue Group NY inc., Waterford, NY
- Schenectady International, Rotterdam, Niskayuna, NY
- Gregory Supply, Plattsburg, Williston, Burlington, Ray Brook., Bast Hatfield Inc. Halfmoon, NY
- Turner Construction, (RPI) Troy, NY
- Finch Pryun, South Glens Falls, NY
- LaCorte Electrical Contractors, Troy, NY
- Hollingsworth & Vose, Easton & Greenwich, NY
- Quad Graphics, Saratoga Springs, NY

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Coordinator Companies

- Access Health
- Curtis Lumber
- EHS Excellence Consulting
- General Electric
- Old Castle Pre-Cast
- Turner Construction
- United States Postal Service.

The OSHA Challenge Program, as delivered in our unique group-mentoring effort, caters specifically to organizations that are interested in VPP but need a “roadmap” to attain VPP status. The program is sufficiently flexible to recognize that there are many employers working towards attaining VPP, and these companies are at different stages in the development of an effective safety and health management system.

Comments from Coordinators and Participants

“All Challenge Program Participants came to the table with a common goal: improve safety in the workplace. In doing so, we are also able elevate the morale of our staff. Every business is faced with the challenge to recruit and retain excellent people. This is of particular importance to the healthcare industry, as we are faced with staffing shortages that continue to climb. The Challenge Program has offered a step-wise approach toward building better safety and health programs. Our experience with the Challenge has been nothing but positive - to the point that we have been nominated as one of the *“Great Places to Work in the Greater Capital Region”* (two years in a row). While we did not win our category, our success comes from laying a foundation for an improved hospital culture. A culture that delivers great patient experiences and quality care and a culture that is owned by great employees.”

—Ron Zimmerman, Glens Falls Hospital

“Our experience participating in the new Group Challenge program was both rewarding and left us with a sense of accomplishment. This group concept was great and with the open forum we were allowed to share some of our best practices. We also shared some of our ideas that may not have worked as well as we planned, that’s where having a group was another plus, they offered suggestions to help us improve. Also being asked to present topics that we felt we had some expertise in was another sense of fulfillment.”

“We took another step forward to bring more employees into the VPP family. Each meeting we attended, we tried to show that the VPP/Challenge programs were for each employee at work as well as for their families at home. By participating in this new program we accomplished an improvement of “employee participation” by 35%.”

“As this program reaches its first anniversary, I could only hope that we can still keep the Group Challenge program going with this core group of local companies that we have grown close to. Our goal to be a VPP Star site is still in our future, and having experienced, caring, and driven people, has made this one of the best programs we have been involved in.”

—William Hall Jr. VPP leader, Schenectady International, Inc.

“Our involvement in the VPP Mentoring Program has been a memorable one. We began our journey with a visit to Curtis Lumber (mentors) two years ago. We did this after hearing about their great track record regarding injuries and safety in general. We were initially skeptical about being too close to OSHA, but that changed after meeting John Tomich and Ed Jerome. Their commitment to employee safety and their positive attitude towards the employer made us comfortable. We never stopped attending. We even hosted meetings at our facility (imagine that, OSHA invited to our house). We listened, we asked, we spoke, we learned. We put a safety committee together. We created an accident review committee. We held ergonomic training for our employees. We got better at documenting and responding to injury trends. The result was a steady decline in our recordable injuries. We continue to work at reducing injuries. We went from a good company to work at to a great company to work for. The mood has changed and the attitudes have shifted in a positive direction. We started this journey with a visit to Curtis Lumber two years ago.”

—Ray Cordani, Safety/Loss Prevention

“The OSHA Challenge has been a wealth of information about OSHA standards, great opportunities to network with other companies, not having to reinvent the wheel in developing policy and systems, bringing us in contact with OSHA people to develop the partnership VPP requires, learning whom to go to for answers, motivational inspiration to go the distance.”

—Paul Raino, Gregory Supply Company

"From my perspective, this journey has brought many good ideas, experiences, and challenges together into a powerful "Think tank" consisting of a results oriented group who have reduced hazards, and increased safety awareness across the board. We have taken tough problems to the table, wrestled with them, and came away with solutions and best practices that benefited everyone. This joint mentoring process should continue until each and every business involved in the OSHA Challenge has a VPP flag proudly unfurled and displayed for

the world to see. They certainly have the foundation and all the right ingredients for a successful future. On behalf of the US Postal Service, We in the Albany District are proud to have been part of this Challenge process with our neighbors and customers. We look forward to what the future hold as we continue to work together to bring ALL employees safely home to their families each and every day."

-Charles D. Farnum, US Postal Service

YOUR ASSOCIATION @ WORK



**Registrar,
CARLENA FORD,**
joined the VPPPA staff
on January 30, 2006.
In her position,

Carlena manages the registration process for conferences and educational programs for the Annual National VPPPA Conference and contracted regional chapter events.

"I'm excited about working with such a fantastic team of people. Also, I look forward to applying my skills with others at VPPPA."

Carlena joins the VPPPA after working for a nonprofit in Alexandria, VA., where she formerly served as a receptionist and customer service representative.

Membership & Development Manager RICHELLE KELLY

You may remember Richelle Kelly managing registration at the regional and National VPPPA conferences. On January 1, 2006, Richelle moved to the membership department as the new Membership & Development Manager.



In her new position, she will be responsible for all aspects of membership and development for the VPPPA. This includes fundraising, advertising, membership recruitment and retention, soliciting sponsorships and marketing. Richelle will also be responsible for creating and following the membership budget, updating the membership section of the Web site, contributing to the quarterly magazine, managing the membership database and processing membership dues.

"I am excited about my new position and looking forward to recruiting new members to join the Association. The VPPPA is committed to improving the resources that are available to you, as you, the members, continue to support the VPPPA," said Richelle.

Richelle has a background in data analysis and database management. She is currently working on her certification as a Certified Association Executive. She is a current member of (PCMA) Professional Convention Management Association and (ASAE) American Society of Association Executives.

