

PUGET SOUND NAVAL SHIPYARD AND INTERMEDIATE MAINTENANCE FACILITY EARNS OSHA VPP STAR STATUS

During a special ceremony on 12 April 2006, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognized the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS & IMF) for continued excellence in worker health and safety. The ceremony was held at the Shipyard to award PSNS & IMF for achieving the highest level in OSHA's



Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) - VPP *Star* status. Out of 1,300

OSHA Star Sites in the country, PSNS & IMF is the second largest industrial facility in the nation, public or private, to be acclaimed a *Star*. It is the third Naval Sea Systems

Command (NAVSEA) shipyard to become an OSHA VPP Star site. Prior awards have gone to Portsmouth and Norfolk Naval Shipyards. [Note: to read success stories on these two shipyards, click on:

<http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/success/all.htm>]

Star Program
Puget Sound Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility
Exceeding the four elements of VPP with Injury and Illness rates at or below the national average



Four Elements of VPP
Management Leadership and Employee Involvement
Worksite Analysis
Hazard Prevention and Control
Safety and Health Training

OSHA protects the safety and health of workers through enforcement of occupational safety and health regulations; outreach, education, and compliance assistance; and cooperative programs. VPP is an OSHA cooperative program that rewards employers with outstanding workplace safety and health programs that control hazards and protect workers. Through the VPP, management, labor and OSHA establish a collaborative

relationship at a worksite that has implemented strong safety and health systems.

To qualify for VPP status, sites must meet or exceed all OSHA regulatory standards and submit to an OSHA review of their programs. OSHA approves successful employers by designating them to one of three VPP program levels: *Star*, *Merit*, or *Star Demonstration*. The VPP *Star* award designation indicates that the organization receiving the award has exceeded the four basic VPP elements:

- Management Leadership & Employee Involvement,
- Worksite Analysis,
- Hazard Prevention & Control, and
- Safety and Health Training.

VPP Star employers have exceptional management systems and programs that prevent occupational injuries and illnesses. A designated *Star* site must have had all of its occupational safety and health program elements operating effectively for at least one year, and its injury and accident rates must be below the national average for that industry.



Hull Maintenance Technician 3rd Class shapes parts out of metal with a cutting torch at the Puget Sound Intermediate Maintenance Facility.

Since PSNS & IMF started the VPP process in 1998, the shipyard has cut its injury and illness rates in half. The Star designation was awarded to PSNS & IMF after OSHA's team conducted a thorough on-site review of the PSNS & IMF VPP application and the Shipyard's safety and health programs. The OSHA team also interviewed employees and completed a tour of PSNS & IMF worksites.

Four examples illustrate how PSNS & IMF transformed itself to attain VPP Star recognition:

1) Founded a **partnership between management, labor, and OSHA** in developing a positive, pro-active safety culture.

2) **Increased safety awareness among all employees** and empowered the work force to accept responsibility for their own personal safety and the safety of their co-workers. Employee involvement is one of the keys to a successful program. PSNS & IMF incorporated the following initiatives to garner increased employee involvement:

- **VPP Passport** - an educational tool to increase employees' knowledge of VPP and the PSNS & IMF safety program. *VPP Passport* also increased individual employee's involvement in his or her own safety. Currently 68% of PSNS & IMF employees have completed the first version of the passport. Version 2 is set to be released soon.
- **Shop, Code, and Project Safety Committees** - Each PSNS & IMF Shop, Code, and Project currently has a Safety Committee made up of employees who work together to solve safety issues in their work areas.
- **Quarterly Worksite Inspections** - Shop, Code, and Project Safety Committees have teamed up with the PSNS & IMF Safety office to conduct safety inspections of the entire facility on a quarterly basis. Previously, the Safety office conducted annual inspections, but with the assistance of employees, they have been able to increase the frequency of the inspections and receive assistance in getting deficiencies corrected in a timely manner.
- **Employee Recognition** - Currently, PSNS & IMF has two employee recognition programs through which employees can be recognized by other employees for safe work practices.
 - The *Safety ACT Program* allows employees to nominate other employees for recognition who perform a specific contribution related to safety.
 - The *VPP Recognition Team* recognizes employees they find working in a safe manner with free lunch tickets.

3) Realized that implementing safety and health standards was not only compatible with cost, quality, and productivity but was the **right and moral thing to do**.

4) OSHA, management, and labor agreed that **safety** is part of the job and **not an add-on item**.

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard was established in 1891 as a Naval Station and was designated Navy Yard Puget Sound in 1901. During World War I, the Navy Yard constructed ships, including 25 subchasers, seven submarines, two minesweepers, seven sea-going tugs, and two ammunition ships, as well as 1,700 small boats. During World War II, the Shipyard primarily made repairs to battle-damaged U.S. and Allied Forces ships.



Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, ca. 1900.
Courtesy Bremerton Naval Museum

Following World War II, Navy Yard Puget Sound was designated Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. The Shipyard engaged in an extensive program of modernizing carriers. In the 50's, the Shipyard began an era of new construction with the building of a new class of guided missile frigates. USS SCULPIN (SSN 590) was the first nuclear powered submarine worked on at PSNS in 1965. In 1990, the Navy authorized a program to recycle nuclear powered ships at PSNS.



VPP flag is raised at PSNS & IMF.

On May 15, 2003, PSNS and the Naval Intermediate Maintenance Facility, Pacific Northwest (located at Bangor, Bremerton and Everett, WA) consolidated into one maintenance activity - creating PSNS & IMF. The consolidation improved fleet readiness by allowing the Navy to accomplish the highest priority, real-time ship maintenance requirements while achieving the most maintenance effort possible for the tax dollar.

Today, PSNS & IMF is the Pacific Northwest's largest Naval shore facility and one of Washington State's largest industrial installations. Approximately 6% of the Shipyard's workload involves

deactivation, reactor compartment disposal, and recycling of ships. The Shipyard's other significant capabilities include alteration, overhaul and repair, construction, and drydocking of all types of naval vessels. In addition to in-yard work, the Shipyard provides repair teams for on-site repair work on a variety of naval ships at their home port locations.

As a VPP *Star* site, PSNS & IMF derives numerous benefits. Because PSNS & IMF has taken its occupational safety and health programs well beyond the minimum regulatory requirements, OSHA has removed the shipyard from its programmed inspection list. Shipyard workers, however, lose none of their rights; OSHA is required to continue to respond to reports of major mishaps, valid employee complaints, and chemical spill incidents. Additional advantages include fewer work-related injuries and illnesses, improved employee morale, and increased capacity with reduced costs.



PSNS & IMF employees march in VPP Star ceremony parade.

Since 2002, PSNS & IMF has reduced injuries by 56 percent. OSHA recognized PSNS & IMF for many best practices that contributed to this mishap reduction trend such as the VPP Passport for employees; its Fall Protection Program, which identifies types of protection needed with falls of six feet or greater; and the increased frequency of formal safety inspections. These safety initiatives and others translated into reduced injuries, more productive work time, and more efficient process controls to support job execution.



Thousands of PSNS & IMF employees gathered to celebrate during the OSHA VPP Star award ceremony on 12 April 2006.

During the VPP Star award ceremony, thousands of PSNS & IMF personnel gathered on the Shipyard's main thoroughfare to celebrate and to listen to speakers. "The Puget Sound Naval Shipyard is a complex operation," stressed Mr. Steven Witt, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health. He explained, "It

is remarkable to see that your three year average injury rate is 42 percent lower than the industry average.” Mr. Witt stressed that the success of safety initiatives at PSNS & IMF could be attributed to the leadership at the Shipyard. “It is especially reassuring to know that the management and union leadership here today are supportive and will continue to make safety a priority,” said Witt.

"PSNS has clearly demonstrated that, with management and labor collaboration, it is possible to implement a systematic approach to safety by utilizing worksite analysis, hazard control and prevention, and employee training," said Richard Terrill, OSHA Regional Administrator. "Their efforts have meant that far fewer shipyard employees have been injured in recent years."

Mr. Richard Wright, Jr., Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Safety) (DASN(S)) praised PSNS & IMF personnel for aggressively addressing one of the Department of the Navy's (DON) top objectives - emphasizing safety. He said, "To reduce the risk to the Navy and Marine Corps team will increase mission effectiveness." Mr. Wright also stressed that PSNS & IMF has set the example of an effective Safety Program, an example that is now being followed throughout the entire Navy and Marine Corps team. The Acting DASN(S) presented the command with the DON safety award and flag.



Mr. Richard Wright, Jr., Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Safety) and Captain Dan Peters, Commander PSNS & IMF, display the DON safety banner presented by Mr. Wright during the VPP awards ceremony.

Closing ceremony remarks were made by CAPT Dan Peters, Commander, PSNS & IMF, who asked PSNS & IMF personnel to continue to make every effort to maintain the level of excellence they have achieved as an OSHA VPP Star site. “This major accomplishment shows just how committed the PSNS & IMF staff is to safety,” said CAPT Peters. “Stay the course, stay focused...safety will continue to be a core value in everything we perform.”

For more information on OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program, how to qualify, a VPP eligibility checklist, and a VPP application, visit:

OSHA VPP

<http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp/>

VPP Participants' Association

<http://www.vpppa.org/>

VPP Eligibility Checklist

<http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp/vppflyer.pdf>

VPP Information Kit

http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/vpp/VPP_Kit.pdf

VPP Application Information, OSHA Instruction TED 8.4

http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive_pdf/TED_8_4.pdf

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