

August 6, 2004

## BOILER PLANT SAFETY EDUCATION

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines VHA policy on boiler safety education.

### 2. BACKGROUND

a. Boiler plant safety is of paramount importance. Boiler plants must operate in a safe and economical manner recognizing their importance and the potential for pressure vessel and/or furnace explosion. Boiler plant safety is dependent on well-educated staff, properly functioning safety equipment, proper operational procedures and a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

b. Knowledge and skill are essential to safe operation and maintenance of boiler plants and safety equipment. Without constant and vigilant care, equipment involving combustion and/or steam production under pressure, such as boilers and pressure vessels, can and occasionally do explode with significant property damage and sometimes fatalities. The boiler plant is essential to the operation of the medical center providing steam and hot water required for sanitation, infection control and a healthful environment for the delivery of health care. Fuel costs for the boilers are a significant portion of a medical center's expenditures.

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that Boiler Plant Operators, Boiler Plant Supervisors and Boiler Plant Service Managers successfully complete appropriate Boiler Safety Education.

### 4. ACTION

a. **Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Directors.** VISN Directors are responsible for a management system that ensures compliance with this VHA policy.

b. **Medical Center Director.** The Medical Center Director, is responsible for:

(1) Using qualified senior staff to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the health care facility boiler plant.

(2) Developing a management system to ensure that all Boiler Plant Operators, Boiler Plant Supervisors and Service Managers successfully complete appropriate Boiler Safety Education courses in a timely manner.

(a) A 12-part video and handbook on the boiler safety education program titled "Safe Steam'in" has been developed by the Employee Education System (EES) as the basic VHA boiler safety education course.

**THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES AUGUST 31, 2009**

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(b) The 12-part course is mandatory for all VHA boiler operators and their immediate supervisors. Parts 10-12 are mandatory for Chief Engineers, Facility Managers, and Safety Specialists. *NOTE: Nothing in this Directive is to be construed to mean that the 12-part "Safe Steam'in" courses are to be the only educational programs for boiler plant staff.*

(3) Ensuring the 12-part course is completed by November 1, 2005, or within 18 months of an employee's assignment to boiler plant operation, boiler plant supervisory, or boiler plant managerial duties.

**5. REFERENCES**

- a. National Fire Protection Association 85, Boiler and Combustion Systems Hazard Code.
- b. Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations' Management of the Environment of Care (EC) Standard 1.7.
- c. VHA Boiler Operations Manual.
- d. VHA Boiler Plant Safety Devices Testing Manual.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES:** The Director, Health Care Engineering (10NB), is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be directed to 202-273-5880.

**7. RESCISSIONS:** None. This VHA Directive expires on August 31, 2009.

S/ Arthur S. Hamerschlag for  
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Acting Under Secretary for Health

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