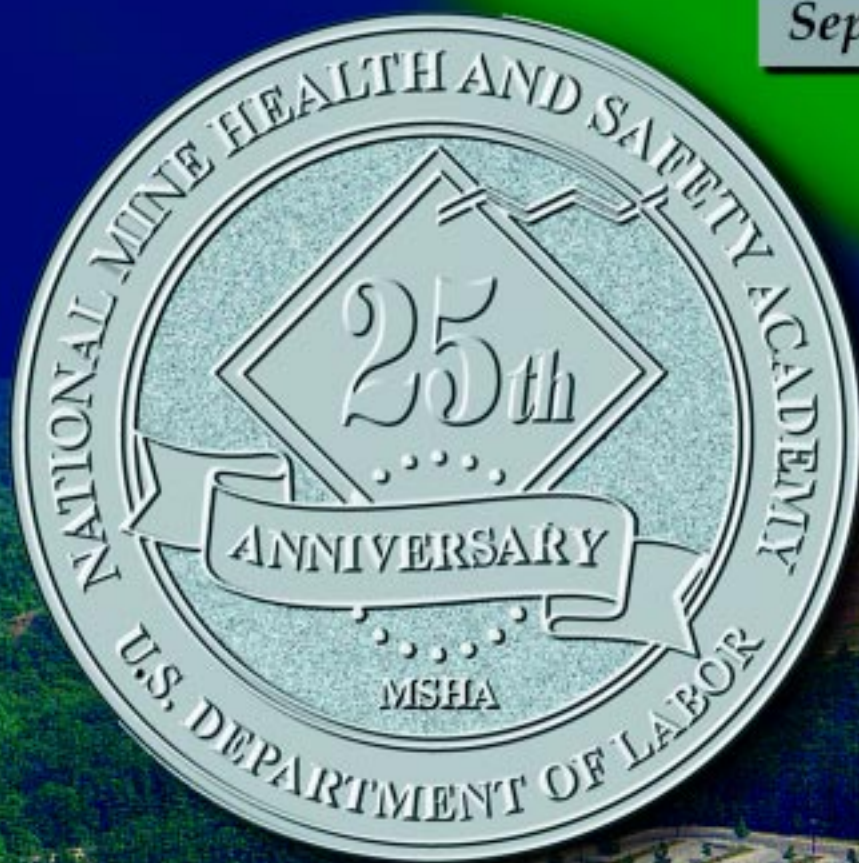


JOSEPH A. HOLMES SAFETY ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN

September/October 2001



**Inside:
The National Mine Health and Safety Academy
Celebrates 25 Years**



Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association

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The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Bulletin contains safety articles on a variety of subjects: fatal accident abstracts, studies, posters, and other health and safety-related topics. This information is provided free of charge and is designed to assist in presentations of groups of mine and plant workers during on-the-job safety meetings. For more information visit the MSHA Home Page at www.msha.gov.

Please Note: The views and conclusions expressed in Bulletin articles are those of the **authors** and should not be interpreted as representing official policy or, in the case of a product, represent endorsement by the **Mine Safety and Health Administration**.

Cover: Cover created by the AVMDB Graphics Section. If you have a potential cover photo, please send an 8”x10” print or digital image on disk at 300 dpi resolution to Donald Starr, Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Bulletin, National Mine Health and Safety Academy, 1301 Airport Road, Beaver, WV 25813-9426.

National Mine Health and Safety Academy Celebrates 25th Anniversary

On August 24, 2001, over 600 representatives of government and industry gathered to participate in the 25th Anniversary celebration of the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, West Virginia. Honored guests for the program included Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao, Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health Dave D. Lauriski, and Senator Robert C. Byrd, who delivered the keynote address.

Featured speakers for the program included Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito, Congressman Nick J. Rahall II, UMWA President Cecil E. Roberts, National Mining Association President Jack

N. Gerard, International Union of Operating Engineers General President Frank Hanley, National Stone, Sand and Gravel President Jennifer Joy Wilson, United Steelworkers of America President Leo W. Gerard, and Bituminous Coal Association President David Young.

A performance of the National Anthem by Leisa Dobson-Watson was followed by an invocation given by Father Thomas Acker, Executive Director of Forward West Virginia Incorporated. The festivities ended with a special benediction by Reverend Thomas V. Moore.

Secretary Chao began her speech by calling for the issuance of a U.S. Postal Service commemorative stamp honoring coal miners. Chao said, "Today, I join with Congresswoman Capito in urging the United States Citizen Stamp Advisory Committee to authorize a commemorative stamp honoring America's coal miners. It is time that we recognize the contributions and sacrifices that generations of coal miners

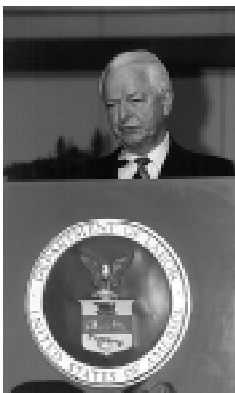


Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao

have made to America, her economy, and her standard of living."

Events for the 25th Anniversary celebration featured numerous demonstrations, which were performed throughout the day. These demonstrations included a mock mine emergency and rescue operation, firefighting techniques, and a controlled methane explosion. Academy departments offered demonstrations in their respective areas including the Technical Information Center and Library, the Mine Simulation Laboratory, the emergency operations building, the electronic classroom, the fire pad, computer

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Senator Robert C. Byrd

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laboratories, and video production.

As part of an Equipment Safety and Health Exposition, actual surface and underground mining equipment were on display in various areas of the Academy complex.

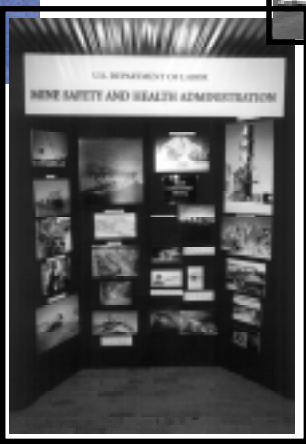
The National Mine Health and Safety Academy officially opened its doors as the seventh permanent Federal academy in the United States in August 1976. The Academy was established to meet the challenge outlined in the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 which contained provisions for the training of Federal mine inspectors as well as establishing education and training for states, mine operators, and miners.

Dedicated in 1976, the Academy houses the largest educational facility in the world dedicated solely to health and safety in mining. The Academy serves as the central training facility for Federal mine inspectors, mine safety professionals from other government agencies, the mining industry, and labor. An estimated 400,000 individuals have received safety training at the Academy during its quarter century of service.

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary



Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association



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Companies Get Recognition for Their Safety Tips

Eight companies received recognition for submitting and implementing three or more tips and remedies for the Accident Reduction Program. MSHA's outreach efforts with S.W.A.T. (Safety Walk and Talk), have inspired companies to take part in programs like the Post Accident Remedies, Accident Buster Awareness Tips.

These companies received a plaque recognizing the mine for its accomplishment signed by Dave Lauriski, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration. In addition, they are recognized on the MSHA homepage and the Accident Reduction Program's Safety Awareness Roster.

The following companies were recognized for their safety tips and remedies:

**Lone Mountain Processing, Darby Fork #1
Pennington Gap, Virginia**

**No. 1 Contracting Corporation
Jeansville Operation
Ashley, Pennsylvania**

**No. 1 Contracting Corporation
Harwood Quarry
Ashley, Pennsylvania**

**Bridgeport Quarry #1
Carrollton, Texas**

**Frontera Materials, Inc
Mobile Crusher #2
Weslaco, Texas**

**Lone Mountain Processing, Huff Creek #1
Pennington Gap, Virginia**

**Kentucky May Mining, 5-A
Amburgey, Kentucky**

**Troup Mine
Troup, Texas**

Heimer Receives Prestigious President's Life Saving Award



Donny Heimer with his family after receiving the awards.

Mine electrical foreman Donny Heimer received the President's Life Saving Award from Wes Taylor in a ceremony held at the Oak Hill Mine. Donny was successful in saving a lady's life by performing the Heimlich Maneuver when she became choked on a piece of meat.

In addition to receiving the Presidential Award, Donny also received the National Holmes Safety Association award from the MSHA "Man of the Year" Glen Hood at the same ceremony.

Joint National NASMIA, MSIA and JHSA Meeting Scheduled in June 2002

The 2002 Joint National Meeting of the National Association of State Mine Inspection Agencies, Mine Safety Institute of America, and the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association will be conducted June 3-6, 2002, in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Make plans now to attend what promises to be one of 2002's most exciting and informative mining industry meetings at a great location in the Southeast. More detailed information about program activities will be released by the Virginia Host Committee early in 2002.

Meeting accommodations will be at the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, 3900 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451 (Telephone: 757-428-1711)

Watch for further details and register early!!!

Call For Papers

Anyone interested in making a presentation at the meeting should contact Richard Wood at (304) 256-3240. We are particularly interested in the following issues: Hazardous Communications; Workforce Issues/Aging Workforce; Compliance Issues; New Technology for Health and Safety; Power Haulage; and Human Behaviors (Factors). However, any topic which could contribute positively to miner health and safety will be considered. You will be asked to provide a paper by January 15, 2002.

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Unload Your Pickup Truck!

*Story submitted by
Bruce B. Palmer*



Don't leave materials sticking out of the back of a pickup truck that someone could walk into at night, or even during the day if the truck is parked in a blind spot. By making sure these items are unloaded as quickly as possible, eye injuries, head injuries, and many close calls can be prevented.

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*Post Accident
Investigation
Remedies*

***“Fire
Suppression
Systems-
Know How
They
Operate”***

Recently, a miner was seriously burned when the equipment he was operating caught fire. The operator hit the manual fire suppression actuator, but did not pull the pin. Thus, it did not actuate. There were no fire extinguishers in the cab and the operator was burned when he tried to get out by the normal egress route. He finally managed to get out on the opposite side. The following suggestions may help avoid this situation:

Training on fire suppression systems should be given to operators of trucks, bulldozers and other enclosed cab vehicles. A manual fire suppression actuator should be used as a training tool in this effort, if it is utilized. Special emphasis should be placed on activating the system in realistic conditions.

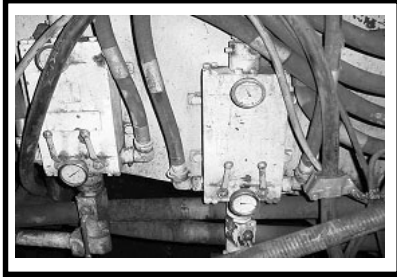
All fire extinguishers and fire suppression systems including alarms, shutdowns and other associated equipment need to be thoroughly examined and periodically checked for proper operation by competent personnel in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommended schedule. Any equipment found deficient needs to be repaired or

replaced and the system retested for proper operation. Ask the manufacturer for their recommended maintenance schedules.

A small fire extinguisher should be located in the cab of all vehicles to be readily accessible to the operator. The fire extinguisher should be a Type ABC.

The mining industry is strongly encouraged to consider and adopt this suggestion. MSHA believes that unnecessary injuries and fatalities could be avoided in the future as a result.

The cost for implementation of this remedy should not exceed \$100 for training devices.

*Post Accident Investigation Remedies***“Hose Smart”**

There have been 18 accidents involving hydraulic hoses in longwall incidents between 1995 and 2000. In today's dynamic longwall mines, higher productivity has been achieved by increasing the size and capacity of longwall mining equipment. Electrical and hydraulic power requirements to operate these systems have also increased over the last 20 years. In a recent accident, a longwall shearer operator was fatally injured when he was struck by a 1 1/4-inch 4,500 psi main hydraulic line with approximately 15 pounds of couplings attached. Before retro-fitting or modifying high pressure hydraulic lines, it is important to use properly rated and sized couplers, filters, fittings, and hoses designed

to handle your longwall systems specifications. Mismatched components result in using additional fittings which can increase pressure losses and increase the chance of line failure compromising safety and performance. Be sure to adhere to all government, industry, and manufacturer's specifications and standards when selecting hydraulic system components. Monitor the high pressure pump gage and the amount of emulsion used on your longwall. Hoses may have to be changed if the high pressure pump gage is fluctuating more than normal or more emulsion is being used than normal. After any modifications have been completed, it is critical to mount and secure hoses in a fashion that minimizes the connection point(s) exposure to bending and shearing stresses. All high pressure hydraulic hoses should be mounted keeping in mind the following:

1. Mounting hardware, guards, shields, and hangers must be utilized to maximize safety and performance.
2. Properly secure each side of the connection point in a substantial manner in the event of fitting failure or rupture. Ask yourself, “If this line

breaks, am I protected?”

3. Keep in mind that longwalls are dynamic and you must allow for enough slack in the hoses for pan and shield advancement. This will alleviate stresses placed on connection points.

4. Install hoses according to manufacturer's specifications. The attached picture shows the proper way to secure a hydraulic filter on a high pressure line. This filter is bolted down and installed on the headgate and not subjected to bending and shearing stresses.

In summary, hydraulic hoses, fittings, filters, and couplers should be sized and rated for your longwall systems capacity. Proper equipment selection, sizing, routing, clamping and mounting will greatly reduce the potential for future high pressure hydraulic system accidents.

The mining industry is strongly encouraged to consider and adopt this suggestion. MSHA believes that unnecessary injuries and fatalities could be avoided in the future as a result.

No cost increase is expected for this remedy. However, any costs that may be incurred should be more than offset by increased safety and productivity. ■

Joseph A. Holmes Awards Program

Type “B-1” and “B-2” Awards

Type “B-1” Awards for Individual Workers

Eligibility for this award requires a minimum of 40 years of cumulative work experience in the mining and related industries without incurring an injury that resulted in lost work-days. This experience **does not include clerical or office work**. Applications for retired persons are also accepted within two years after their retirement date.

Past recipients are eligible for a subsequent award when they have added five or more years to their previous work record without incurring an injury with lost work days.

The recipient of this award receives a *Certificate of Honor*, a pin and a decal bearing the insignia of the Association containing the number 40. Applications for this type of award must be reviewed and approved by the Safety Awards Committee. This committee meets each year prior to the national meeting. The Secretary/Treasurer will forward all applications to the commit-

tee members for their review and comment prior to the meeting.

The Secretary/Treasurer of the Association should receive the following information by February 1:

1. Name and occupation of person recommended
2. Name and location of mine or plant where employed
3. Name and address of employer(s) and MSHA mine identification number
4. Type of industry in which the person has worked, such as copper smelter, cement plant, petroleum refinery, coal or metal mine
5. Principal product
6. Beginning and ending dates (month, day, year) of the record period.
7. Any other information which might help in considering the case. State whether work experience was underground, surface, or both.

8. Signature of responsible official on the application

Type “B-2” Awards for Individual Officials

(For Record of Group Working Under Their Supervision)

Supervisors are eligible for this award if their crews have achieved a safety record of no lost time accidents with 250,000 work-hours underground or 350,000 workhours on the surface. When a work group achieves the required number of workhours without incurring a lost workday injury and there have been two or more supervisors during that work record, the work unit may be recognized in lieu of the supervisor. The Association gives only one award for a single record. Two individuals at two different levels of supervision cannot receive an award for the same cited work group record. However, the Association will consider additional awards for individuals who exceed their previous records by 50,000 workhours or more. The Association will also consider lower manhour

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achievements if the record spans more than five years. The Association recognizes safety records greater than 20 years without regard to workhour totals.

Type “B-2” Award Supervisor/Manager Work Group

Awarded to supervisor/manager or a group that achieves the following work record without a lost workday injury:

(a) 250,000 workhours in underground operations, or

(b) 350,000 workhours in surface operations

Records with no lost workday injuries spanning 5 years can be considered with lower workhours.

Greater than 20 years regardless of workhours.

Only one supervisor may be recognized for the record.

Adding 50,000 workhours will qualify for another award.

The Association does not usually consider officials in policy making capacity for awards unless they are directly responsible for developing the program or directing the work.

The recipient of this award receives a *Certificate of Honor* reflecting the specific accomplish-

ment of the work group supervised by this individual.

Applications for this type of award must be reviewed and approved by the Safety Awards Committee. This committee meets once each year prior to the national meeting. The Secretary/Treasurer will forward all applications to the committee members for their review and comment prior to the meeting.

The Secretary/Treasurer of the Association should receive the following information by February 1:

1. Name and occupational title of individual recommended, if the name is to appear on the certificate
2. Name and address of the employer and MSHA mine identification number
3. Designation or other identity of the work group(s) achieving the record and dates supervised by the recommended individual
4. Type of industry, such as copper smelter, cement plant, petroleum refinery, coal or metal mine (underground or surface), and the department making the record
5. Date of the last injury with lost workdays
6. Beginning and ending dates (month, day, year) of the period covered by the

record

7. Total workhours of exposure in the period covered by the record. Applications will not be considered if this information is omitted.

8. Average number of employees supervised by the official during the period covered by the record

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Safety Management Programs Make Dollars and Sense

By Adele L. Abrams, Esq.,
CMSP

Do safety and health management programs improve a company's bottom line? The answer is a resounding YES, although benefits may be somewhat hard to quantify. But in addition to outright savings on worker's compensation benefit claims, civil liability damages, and litigation expenses, having a solid safety and health management program with top-down commitment will improve productivity and employee morale. It can even make the difference between winning and losing bids and government contracts.

The days are over when companies can view safety and health violations as the status quo, and regard OSHA/MSHA violations and the attendant civil penalties as another "cost of doing business." For one thing, penalties are getting higher and higher. For another, knowing violations that result in the death or serious injury of a worker may be prosecuted

at the state level under criminal laws . . . or may result in a referral by OSHA or MSHA to the U.S. Department of Justice. A company may love to see its name in the newspaper . . . but not when it concerns indictment of management personnel!

It is just common sense to recognize that an unhealthy workplace will lead to unhappy workers, and that management must lead by example. Why, then, are corporate safety and health management programs such a hard sell? Why does safety continue to be (erroneously) viewed as the enemy of productivity?

The Hidden Costs of Failed Safety and Health Systems

Anyone who has had the misfortune of witnessing or handling the aftermath of a serious or fatal on-the-job injury knows that, without question, the costs go far beyond those that appear in the company's ledger book. In the manufacturing industry, employees and contractors may suffer job-related amputations, burns, cumulative trauma disorders, crushing injuries, and

health conditions including cancer, brain damage, neurological problems and lung disorders. The toll that such injuries (even where non-fatal) take on a worker and his or her family is indescribable.

For those who survive, or who work with the accident or illness victim, the costs continue with psychological stress that may require years of counseling. Many times, co-workers who witness a serious event find themselves unable to return to the worksite at all, which presents additional costs to the company through the abrupt loss of skilled workers. A plant with a singularly bad reputation for safety and health may find itself unable to attract workers at all or may have to pay wages well above market value to do so. These are just a few of the "hidden" costs of a poor safety and health program.

Moreover, as more information concerning a company's OSHA and MSHA compliance and injury/illness experience becomes publicly available over the Internet and from the federal agencies

through FOIA requests, foes of industrial growth may use this data to defeat permit applications or zoning change requests. Part of being a “good corporate citizen”—rather than a company that no one wants in their backyard—is offering a safe and healthful work environment to the local residents.

Companies may also “internalize” costs associated with workplace injuries or illnesses, to the detriment of their safety and health program management. If some other organization (such as worker’s compensation, social security, welfare or other insurance) pays the costs, corporate management may have a disincentive to control hazards. This is “penny wise and pound foolish.”

When insurance pays for the immediate costs of employee injuries, ultimately we all pay—either in the form of higher premiums, inability to obtain insurance completely, or passed-through costs to the consumer. Conversely, when there are fewer accidents, society saves as a whole. Fewer hospitals, medical professionals and rehabilitation facilities will be needed, and employee productive capacity will not be reduced as a result of occupational injury,

disease and death.

Why Do Safety Programs Break Down?

As we all know from the bestselling book, sometimes bad things happen to good people. I do not believe for a minute that corporate executives set out to kill and maim workers, and it is very frustrating to see companies portrayed as such villains by the press when they come under Federal regulatory agency attack. Rather than malevolence, I believe that the key factor blocking management acceptance of safety and health program development is ignorance. Too often, those in authority fail to realize that:

- Specific and measurable goals (besides injury/illness rates) must be established to make it possible to evaluate and hold managers responsible for their safety and health performance.
- Employee training is worth far more than its costs of time and money. Each well-trained employee can function as a “safety specialist” who helps to identify hazards and prevent costly tragedies.
- Industrial products and processes must be subject to comprehensive hazard identification, process safety and risk assessment, and human factors analysis before being implemented or utilized in the work-

place.

- Occupational health hazards must be monitored. Companies cannot play ostrich about the long-term, adverse health effects of exposure to toxic or hazardous chemicals. It is necessary to heed statistical trends in a company’s data and pay attention to anecdotal information (e.g., concerning, perhaps, a large number of cancer cases among a company’s retired workers) in order to avoid future class action suits. The experience of the asbestos industry—and the current focus on diesel particulate and occupational silica exposure—hold valuable lessons. An estimated 100,000 deaths occur each year due to occupational disease. If some of these are your workers, and management ignored obvious indications that a health hazard existed on-site, your company may be the target of the next class action suit.

- “Near Miss” incidents must be investigated as seriously as serious accidents, because they reveal the workplace’s true hazard potential—and failure to take them seriously encourages employees to use “shortcuts” to circumvent established safe procedures.

- Processes that are

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related to a high number of non-fatal lost-time injuries should be reviewed carefully to see if they need reengineering. In general industry, machine hazards produce 19 percent of all compensable injuries with permanent disability, according to the National Safety Council. Falls from elevations are responsible for another 17 percent of disabling injuries (and 12.5 percent of workplace fatalities).

- Every accident resulting in serious injury and/or property damage must undergo “root cause analysis” in order to gauge the likelihood of reoccurrence. Too often, management adopts a “blame the victim” mentality that avoids serious review of the workplace systems and procedures if an alternative cause (e.g., an employee’s intoxication) can be identified. The fact is, an employee who falls to his death may have been drunk but that does not mean a legitimate fall hazard did not exist! Blaming the victim may permit a company to avoid redesigning the work area in the short term, but it will not prevent similar accidents in the future.

- Programs must be in place to ensure that independent contractors perform safely, and that

visitors to the worksite are given adequate hazard information to prevent inadvertent exposure to dangerous equipment, conditions or substances.

- Contract bids must require contractors to provide safety performance information so that their past records can be evaluated as part of the selection criteria.

- Safety and occupational health management is a full time assignment and cannot be handled by the resident engineer, bookkeeper, front-line supervisor, or human resources assistant “when time is available.” Safety and health management is a profession, not an ancillary task to be addressed occasionally. This may be the most frequent mistake that companies make . . . and it may only become apparent after the facility is subject to complete OSHA or MSHA inspection or has a tragic accident.

How to Convince Management That “Safety Pays”

In recent years, encouraging “top down” safety and health program management has become a priority for Federal and state agencies involved with safety regulation and enforcement. A survey of employers indicates that the Top Ten motivations

for taking safety actions were:

- (1) Cost of workers’ compensation insurance (59 percent);
- (2) “Right thing to do” (51 percent);
- (3) “Increases Profitability” (33 percent);
- (4) Federal/State safety rules (31 percent);
- (5) “Too many accidents” (29 percent);
- (6) Employee morale (26 percent);
- (7) Productivity (23 percent);
- (8) OSHA fines (20 percent);
- (9) Employee concerns (5 percent); and
- (10) Recommendations of outside experts (13 percent).³

Federal Programs

The original OSHA effort to encourage use of safety and health management programs was the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) initiative, which was established in 1982, was restructured in 1996 and is still in effect. The VPP emphasizes the importance of worksite safety and health programs in meeting the goals of the OSH Act, and provides official recognition of excellent safety and health programs, assistance to employers in their efforts, and the benefits of a cooperative approach to resolve potential safety and

health problems. Recognition in the VPP requires rigorous attention to workplace safety by all personnel. Sites are approved based on their written safety and health program and their overall performance in meeting the standards set by the program.

The VPP is comprised of program elements that have been demonstrated to reduce the incidence and severity of workplace injuries and illnesses.

- The “STAR” program is the most highly selective program and is for applicants with occupational safety and health programs that are comprehensive and successful in reducing workplace hazards. Lost workday rates are 53 percent below national averages.

- The “Merit” level is for companies with good programs that are looking to improve and proceed to the STAR level. Lost workday rates are 35 percent below national averages.

The “Demonstration” level is designed for contractors who meet the requirements as STAR-level companies but are not otherwise eligible for the STAR or Merit designations.

VPP participation is strictly voluntary and

OSHA keeps application information confidential. Participating employers must still comply with OSHA standards, but they are exempt from programmed OSHA inspections (although not from those prompted by employee complaints or triggered by fatalities, catastrophes or significant leaks and spills). More information on the VPP is available on OSHA’s website (www.osha.gov) or through the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants Association (703-761-1146).

OSHA recently unveiled its “e-CAT” initiative, which pushes implementation of a safety culture at every level of an organization. The multi-faceted program has four components: (1) Management System and Safety/Health Integration; (2) Safety and Health Checkups; (3) Creating Change; and (4) Safety and Health Payoffs.

OSHA’s e-CAT program consists of electronic Compliance Assistance Tools (“CATs”) that provide guidance information for employers to develop a comprehensive safety and health program. Such programs are required by some states, although there is currently no such Federal OSHA requirement.

OSHA’s safety and

health program management rule is under development, and its future will depend on the regulatory priorities of the new Bush Administration. The draft rule, released in October 1998, would have covered all general industry employers and applied to hazards covered by the General Duty Clause and existing OSHA standards. The proposal set forth the following core elements:

- Management leadership and employee participation (hold managers accountable for carrying out safety and health responsibilities in the workplace and provide them with the authority to do so; and, provide employees with the opportunity to participate in establishing, implementing and evaluating the program);
- Hazard identification and assessment (conduct worksite inspections, review safety and health information, evaluate new equipment, materials and processes before they are introduced to the workplace, and assess the severity of hazards);
- Information and training (provide employees with information and training in the safety and health program with respect to the nature of hazards,

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what is done to control the hazards, and the provisions of applicable standards); and

- Evaluation of program effectiveness (at least once every two years, after the initial program development).

Existing programs would be grandfathered as long as they satisfied the basic obligation for each core element and the employer could demonstrate the effectiveness of its program. The rule would also require employers at multi-employer worksites to provide information about their hazards, controls, safety and health rules and emergency procedures to all workers.

Finally, OSHA has the “SHARP” program (Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program), which provides incentives and support to develop, implement and improve effective safety and health programs. Participating employers may be exempted from OSHA programmed inspections for a period of one year. All consultation and visits are conducted at employer request. Typical participants are smaller high-hazard businesses (e.g., with fewer than 250 employees) that do not have serious safety and health problems. Participants

undergo a comprehensive site visit and agree to correct all identified safety and health hazards.

SHARP is available in all 29 Federal enforcement states.

Even where not mandated by law, safety and health management programs are critical to the safety and health performance of an industrial employer. Companies that are truly committed to safety management should consider participation in the VPP or the other consultation and professional development programs offered by OSHA or through professional safety organizations such as the American Society of Safety Engineers and the National Safety Council.

State Programs

At the state level, Oklahoma last year was lauded for its “Safety Pays” program, which offers employers assistance in developing management programs that identify and eliminate workplace hazards and ensure compliance with OSHA regulations. Nine employers were among those receiving the state’s “Awards of Excellence” and it was noted that the employers had zero lost-time accidents and had reduced worker’s compensation insurance costs from 47 to 97 per-

cent.

Similar savings were noted in Alberta, Canada, where the Worker’s Compensation Board announced last year that over \$2 million in premium refunds would be distributed to more than 400 employers who registered in the “Partners in Injury Reduction” (PIR) program (the preceding year, 21 companies earned a total of \$1.5 million in premium refunds). Other PIR program benefits included lower worker’s comp premiums, increased worker productivity and minimized accident costs. The average lost-time claim rate at PIR participant worksites dropped more than 20 percent.

Private Sector Initiatives

At the private sector level, the American Textile Manufacturers Institute (ATMI) instituted the “Quest for the Best in Safety and Health” program in 1993 to help its members identify strategies for continuous improvements in safety and health. Approximately 50 companies participated and had impressive results. At one company, Springs Industries, 45 percent of its plants worked 1 million manhours or more without a single lost-time accident—and some exceeded 10

million manhours. What was the secret of their success? The following elements were responsible for a 25 percent decrease in overall injuries in the program's first year:

- Guaranteeing management commitment,
- Careful screening and hiring—selecting those employees with a commitment to safety through in-house referrals,
- Publicizing the company's commitment to safety throughout the community;
- Including discussions of safety issues during employee interviews;
- Offering employee wellness programs (healthier employees are less likely to be injured on the job);
- Training employees thoroughly, with new hire orientation and use of Job Safety Analysis (a blueprint for carrying out each step of a job safely);
- Conducting accident investigations and creating a case management program; and
- Implementing an effective safety program that involves total commitment from employees and management and is based on a "team" approach.

Conclusion

Workplace injuries and illnesses are costly in financial and human terms.

More than \$40 billion are paid each year by employers and their insurers in worker's compensation benefits, or nearly \$500 per covered employee. This figure is simply unacceptable.

Ultimately, company executives must recognize that they have a duty to provide a safe and healthful workplace to those who work for the company or visit the worksite. It is unethical to risk someone's life and health in order to save money. A sound safety and health management program can help companies fulfill their moral obligation.■

¹Negligent or willful injury and wrongful death suits can be brought where contractors or worksite visitors may be involved, as well as under certain state laws (Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio are some examples), which permit employees or their survivors to sue employers in tort where egregious or intentional behavior, or ultra-hazardous activities are involved.

²For additional information on the costs of safety failures, see Motivating Management: When Cost Benefit

Analysis Fails, Vincent A. Gallagher, Jr., Professional Safety (ASSE, May 1999).

³Survey by the National Federation of Independent Business, Motivating Safety in the Workplace (June 1995).



Wellness

Preventing Back Injuries

Back injuries are the most common workplace injury. Approximately 25 percent of all on-the-job accidents reported each year involve back injuries and usually happen when employees are lifting something incorrectly. The following tips can help you lift safely.

LIFT, push and pull with your legs, not your arms or back. Bend at your knees, not at your waist, to help you keep your center of balance.

AVOID lifting higher than your shoulder height. Use a step stool or ladder to move objects at these heights.

USE a mechanical aid, such as a dolly, hand truck or forklift, when you need to move heavy or bulky objects.

TURN with your feet, not your hips or shoulders. Reason: Twisting can overload your spine and lead to serious injury.

CARRY heavy objects close to the body and avoid carrying them in one hand. Avoid a long reach to pick up an object.

Back injuries can be debilitating. Stay on the safe side and lift correctly.

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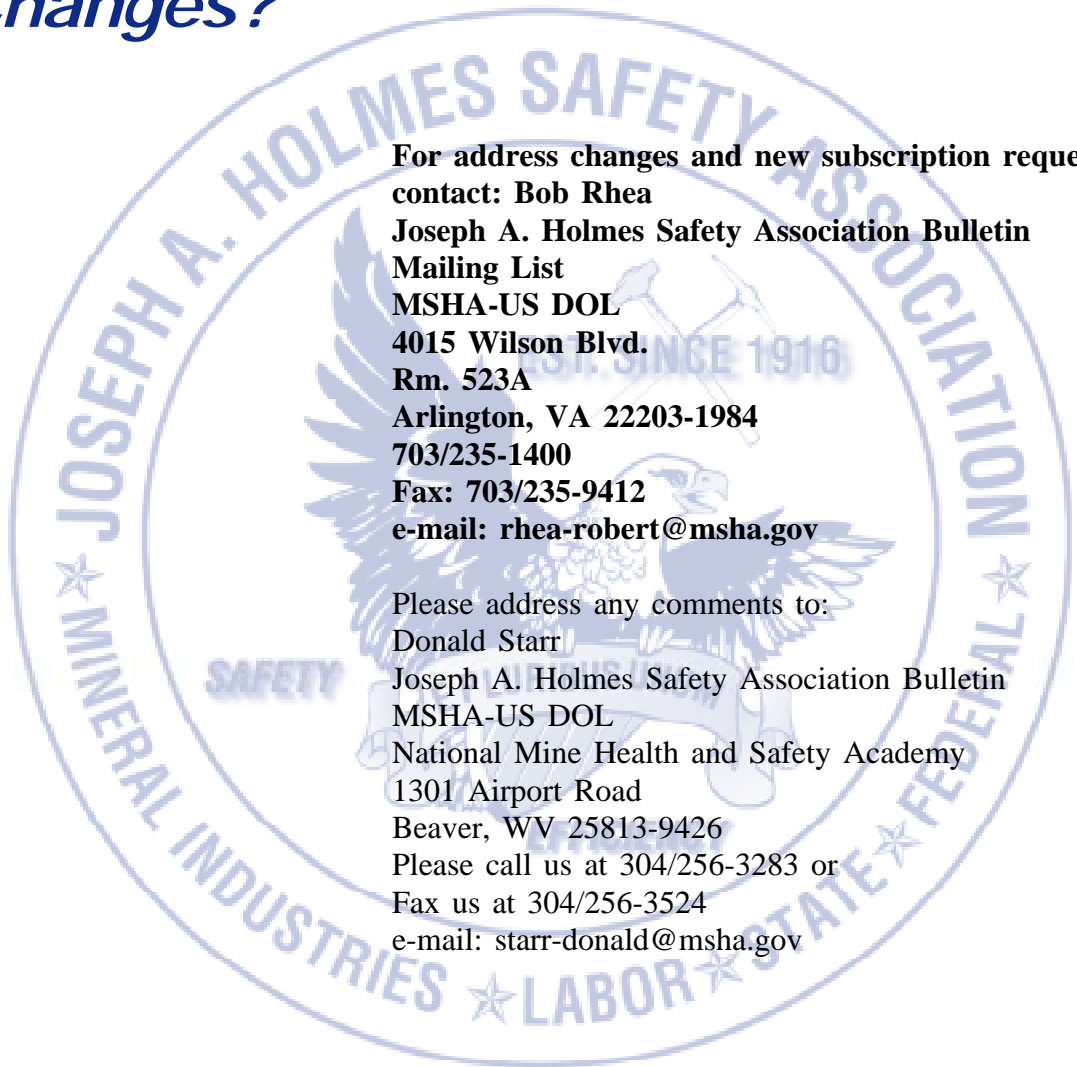
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