

# All About VPP

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## What is VPP?

The Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) promote effective worksite-based safety and health. In the VPP, management, labor, and OSHA establish cooperative relationships at workplaces that have implemented a comprehensive safety and health management system. Approval into VPP is OSHA's official recognition of the outstanding efforts of employers and employees who have achieved exemplary occupational safety and health.

## What Is the Authority for VPP?

The legislative underpinning for VPP is Section (2)(b)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, which declares the Congress's intent "to assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions and to preserve our human resources - (1) by encouraging employers and employees in their efforts to reduce the number of occupational safety and health hazards at their places of employment, and to stimulate employers and employees to institute new and to perfect existing programs for providing safe and healthful working conditions."

## How Does VPP Work?

In practice, VPP sets performance-based criteria for a managed safety and health system, invites sites to apply, and then assesses applicants against these criteria. OSHA's verification includes an application review and a rigorous onsite evaluation by a team of OSHA safety and health experts.

OSHA approves qualified sites to one of three programs:

- Star
- Merit
- Star Demonstration: Recognition for worksites that address unique safety and health issues. Sites that make the grade must submit annual self-evaluations and undergo periodic onsite reevaluations to remain in the programs.

## When Did VPP Begin?

- 1979 - California began experimental program
- 1982 - OSHA formally announced the VPP and approved the first site.
- 1998 - Federal worksites became eligible for VPP.

## How Has VPP Improved Worker Safety & Health?

Statistical evidence for VPP's success is impressive. The average VPP worksite has a Days Away Restricted or Transferred (DART) case rate of 52% below the average for its industry<sup>(1)</sup>. These sites typically do not start out with such low rates. Reductions in injuries and illnesses begin when the site commits to the VPP approach to safety and health management and the challenging VPP application process.

## How Does VPP Benefit Employers?

Fewer injuries and illnesses mean greater profits as workers' compensation premiums and other costs plummet. Entire industries benefit as VPP sites evolve into models of excellence and influence practices industry-wide.

## How Does VPP Benefit OSHA?

OSHA gains a corps of ambassadors enthusiastically spreading the message of safety and health system management. These partners also provide OSHA with valuable input and augment its limited resources.

Another benefit to OSHA is a safety and health advocacy group that came into existence as a result of the VPP, the Voluntary Protection Program Participants' Association (VPPPA). The VPPPA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1985. As part of its efforts to share the benefits of cooperative programs, the VPPPA works closely with OSHA and State Plan States in the development and implementation of cooperative programs. The VPPPA also provides expertise to these groups in the form of comments and stakeholder feedback on agency rulemaking and policies. Additionally, the Association provides comments and testimony to members of Congress regarding legislative bills on health and safety issues.

## What Are Some Unique VPP Innovations?

[Special Government Employees](#): Particularly noteworthy is the OSHA Special Government Employees Program (SGE), where qualified volunteers from VPP sites work alongside OSHA employees as team members on VPP onsite evaluations. The program began in 1994 to help leverage OSHA's limited resources but has grown in the past ten years to provide great benefits to both industry and government.

If you are employed at a VPP site, [see how you can help OSHA and VPP](#) while gaining valuable experience!

**Mentoring**: The Mentoring program, formalized in 1994, matches a potential VPP site with a current VPP site. The mentor site helps the candidate improve its safety and health management system and assists managers and employees in preparing for participation in the VPP.

**Safety and Health Management Course**: Recognizing a need for OSHA enforcement personnel, State Plan consultants, and other interested stakeholders to increase their understanding of safety and health management principles, OSHA developed a 4-day training course. This course emphasizes the VPP culture, philosophy and criteria as the basis for students to understand and evaluate safety and health management systems. Currently this course is offered at the OSHA Training Institute four times a year.

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Footnote (1) This information is calculated annually by the Office of Partnership and Recognition and is based upon the injury and illness data submitted every year by the VPP participants.