



History of VPP

The Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) are designed to recognize and promote effective safety and health management. In the VPP, management, labor, and OSHA/DOE establish a cooperative relationship at a workplace that has implemented a strong program:

- Management agrees to operate an effective program that meets an established set of criteria
- Employees agree to participate in the program and work with management to assure a safe and healthful workplace
- OSHA/DOE initially verifies that the program meets the VPP criteria. We then publicly recognize the site's exemplary program, and remove the site from routine scheduled inspection lists (OSHA/DOE may still investigate major accidents, valid formal employee complaints, and chemical spills)
- OSHA/DOE also reassesses VPP sites every three years to confirm that the site continues to meet VPP criteria (every three years for the Star program; every year for the merit program)

The VPP concept recognizes that compliance enforcement alone can never fully achieve the objectives of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Good safety management programs that go beyond OSHA standards can protect workers more effectively than simple compliance.

VPP participants are a select group of facilities that have designed and implemented outstanding health and safety programs. Star participants meet all VPP requirements. Merit participants have demonstrated the potential and willingness to achieve Star program status, and are implementing planned steps to fully meet all Star requirements.

Secretary of Energy, Admiral James D. Watkins, in a Secretarial Notice issued in December of 1992 directed the establishment of the Department of Energy (DOE) Voluntary Protection Program. In January 1994, a [memorandum](#) from the then Secretary of Energy, Hazel R. O'Leary, implemented this initiative which strengthens safety and health programs for contractors, incorporating the philosophy of total quality management.

This initiative, the "Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program" is patterned after the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Program. It seeks to mitigate risk in the workplace by encouraging and recognizing safety and health programs that demonstrate a level of excellence that can be achieved only through full involvement and commitment by contractor management and their employees.