

A banner year for VPP

With five contractors and projects named as recipients of the Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program Gold Star, Hanford currently accounts for 28 percent of the DOE-VPP Gold Star organizations nationwide.

Hanford DOE-VPP Gold Star winners are Day & Zimmermann Protection Technology Hanford, DynCorp Tri-Cities Services, the Fast Flux Test Facility, Fluor Federal Services and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Although the DynCorp contract with Fluor Hanford was not renewed, the company earned the prestigious DOE-VPP Gold Star while providing site services at Hanford. The majority of these workers and their safety program have transitioned to Fluor Hanford. The quest for DOE-VPP Gold Stars continues across the DOE complex with Fluor Hanford's River Corridor Project now in the final stages of the award process.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration Voluntary Protection Program affects 750,000 American workers. The DOE Voluntary Protection Program is a specialized portion of the program for those who work on federal projects. Four percent of all VPP participants, about 30,000 employees, participate through the DOE-VPP, striving to achieve the level of safety program excellence that will earn DOE-VPP Gold Star status.

The Voluntary Protection Program expands traditional safety and health programs by encouraging employee involvement in a partnership with labor to reduce injuries and obtain superior safety performance. VPP workplaces have average overall lost/away workday rates 50 percent below the industry average.

Companies that make the commitment to seek VPP star status must work hand-in-hand with their employees and labor representatives to ensure that employees own the safety and health program, are involved in hazard prevention and recognition, and assist in the continuous improvement process. Once such a partnership is forged and the safety systems are successfully reducing injuries, the company is ready to apply for star status to OSHA or to DOE. ♦