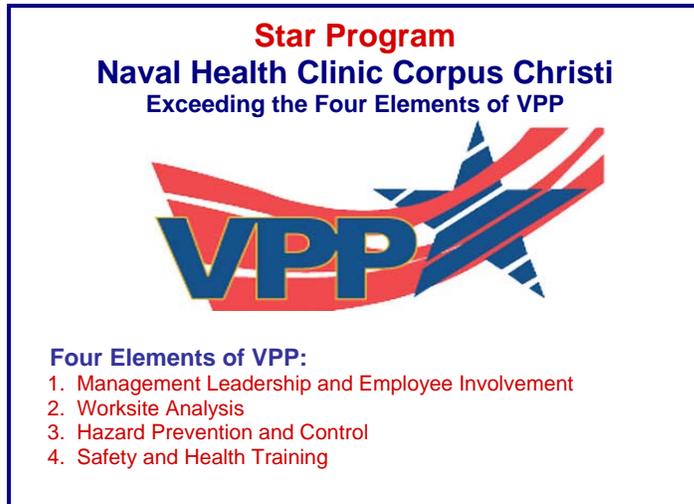


## **VOLUNTARY PROTECTION PROGRAM STAR AWARDED TO NAVAL HEALTH CLINIC CORPUS CHRISTI**

On 12 June 2009, Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi (NHCCC) became the first military treatment facility in the Department of Defense (DoD) to be awarded Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) Star status.

VPP demonstrates cooperative action among government, industry, and labor to address worker safety and health issues and expand worker



protection. VPP participation requirements center on a comprehensive safety and health management system with active employee involvement to prevent or control safety and health hazards at the worksite. OSHA approves successful employers by designating them to one of three VPP program levels: *Star*, *Merit*, or *Star Demonstration*. *Star* is the highest and most

challenging participation category. The VPP *Star* award designation indicates that the organization receiving the award has successfully demonstrated ongoing planning, implementation, integration, and control of four interdependent elements:

- Management Leadership & Employee Involvement
- Worksite Analysis
- Hazard Prevention & Control
- Safety and Health Training.

A designated *Star* site must have had all of its occupational safety and health program elements operating effectively for at least one year, and its three-year injury and illness rates compared to a like industry class in the private sector must be below the national average published annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for that industry. Injury and illness history for a site is evaluated using a three-year total case incident rate (TCIR) and a three-year day away, restricted, and/or transfer case incident rate (DART rate).

NHCCC injury rates are far below the industry average of other similar healthcare facilities.

	*TCIR	**DART Rate	Number of Fatalities	Dollar Value of Worker Compensation Claims
Year 1 2006	0.0	0.0	0	0
Year 2 2007	0.1	0.1	0	0
Year 3 2008	0.4	0.2	0	0
3-Year Rate (Avg.)	0.2	0.1	0	0
Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) National Average for Most Recent Year Available (Year)***	5.3	1.5		
Percentage Difference between BLS and Most Recent Year in Program	-96	-93		

According to Ricky G. Foust, the command's safety and occupational health (SOH) manager, lots of hard work, time, and dedication by the safety department, industrial hygiene department and the occupational health department set the standard for NHCCC's successful achievement of VPP Star status.

"Am I surprised that we were able to achieve this?" asked Foust. "The answer is no! The OSHA VPP program is a perfect fit for Navy medicine. Where else would you find an entire facility dedicated to the health and well being of others? It is our everyday philosophy of taking care of our shipmates and the service members that we serve."

**The following examples illustrate the types of actions taken by Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi toward attaining VPP Star recognition:**

**Chain of Command Commitment:** The safety culture at NHCCC starts at the top with the Commanding Officer who places safety among one of his top priorities. He believes that people are NHCCC's most important asset. As stated in his Safety and Occupational Health Policy Statement, he is committed to ensuring all NHCCC employees enthusiastically participate in the command's safety program. Additionally, he is fully committed to reducing mishaps and hazards within the command. The Commanding Officer reinforces his emphasis on safety at home and in the workplace by personally visiting worksites and regularly distributing e-mails on a variety of safety related topics.

The Safety and Occupational Health policy statement signed by the Commanding Officer clearly states management's commitment to safety. Each Supervisor has safety-related responsibilities and objectives linked to their job assignments and performance evaluations are completed at least annually and most semi-annually.

Command Safety Petty Officers and daily Duty Crews along with Environment of Care (EOC) Managers conduct and participate in EOC meetings, safety promotions and safety inspections/walk-throughs. In 2007, each EOC member was assigned areas of improvement and focus points. The SOH Department audits included topics such as, lock out/tag out, contractor safety, hazard communication, personal protective equipment, and leadership/accountability. Each audit is scored by the use of a Customer Survey form and the results are reviewed. NHCCC continues to show safety commitment to employees, contractors, visitors and patients through numerous safety programs. There is a consistent open line of communication with all employees, contractors, and the beneficiaries.

**Development of the VPP Committee:** In preparation for achieving Star status, command volunteers in 2007 established the NHCCC VPP Committee, a deck plate driven team. The committee created a command-training program that allowed departments to participate in weekly competitions in hazard recognition as well as hazard abatement. Each week, teams would enter a space, identify all the hazards and then provide corrective actions to a variety of simulated healthcare industry related hazards. The committee awarded scores and the timed exercises became highly competitive events throughout the command. Each department took an active role in the competition, and the winning department each week received a rotating trophy symbolic of the Star status award that the command was striving to achieve. The VPP Committee also took part in the command inspection process by providing a monthly inspection report of the facility that identified all deficiencies found.

"What we want to do is encourage you to keep up the intensity which the facility displayed in achieving this standard," said OSHA representative Tony Fuentes, assistant director for the Corpus Christi area, when he presented the VPP Star award to NHCCC Commanding Officer Capt. Randall G. Kelley. "It is a notable achievement to be the first medical treatment facility in DoD."

"I am extremely proud of the efforts of our command," stated Kelley. "This milestone is not only particularly important in the way that we promote safety, it also shows that Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi leads the way."

The award culminated a process that was the result of several years of promoting a safe working environment, coupled with an extensive application and training procedure that began approximately one year



OSHA Safety Specialist Compliance Officer (left) shares a recommendation with Storekeeper 2nd Class and Fire Controlman 1st Class during the OSHA team inspection of NHCCC culminating with receipt of the VPP Star site award.

ago under the command of Capt. Robert B. Sorenson.

A team of naval health clinic military and civilian staff closely examined occupational safety at the facility with a hands-on approach. After extensive training and monthly inspections, the team presented its goals and objectives to the executive steering committee for buy-in. Using information gleaned from OSHA assist visits, the command prepared and then submitted an application in August 2008.

During a formal inspection in November, the OSHA team appraised NHCCC's program and documentation. They also conducted interviews throughout the command. Basing their recommendations on the staff's knowledge and willingness to participate and the command's established safe working environment, NHCCC passed with zero discrepancies.

"Now that we have received this award," stated Kelley, "it is our obligation to continue our commitment to occupational safety and health. We will continue our training and make sure our staff and our patients are aware just how important safety is to us and their safety is to us. The naval health clinic leadership from the top down will encourage participation by all."



Capt. R. G. Kelley, commanding officer NHCCC, lifts the OSHA VPP Star Award during a presentation by OSHA representative Tony Fuentes, assistant director for the Corpus Christi area.

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