Creating a Healthy Partnership: Strategies for Union Participation
Objectives

After this training you will be able to:

• Identify union and management misconceptions
• Identify participation requirements
• Describe communication tips for unions and employees
• Describe the value of mentors and training for unions
• Identify ways to encourage meaningful union and employee involvement.
Unions, Management and VPP

• VPP is a cooperative partnership between the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Management and Labor

• Keys to establishing this partnership are to:
  – Involve the unions early
  – Include unions in the decision to begin the path to VPP
  – Consult Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) and Union By-Laws for your organization.
Union Misconceptions about VPP

• VPP will infringe on employee rights, or Union authority
• VPP will inhibit the bargaining process
• VPP will remove OSHA from the safety oversight
• Management will introduce unrelated items under the blanket of VPP.

Teamwork is the Ultimate Goal!
Management Misconceptions about Unions

- Concerned about counterproductive attitudes
- VPP will be used as a bargaining chip
- Union will introduce unrelated items under the blanket of VPP.

Teamwork is the Ultimate Goal!
Participation Requirements
Participation Requirements

• Support requirements to participate in VPP include:
  – Written documentation stating union support
  – Participation on S&H activities.

• Union has the right to withdraw its support for S&H concerns
  – It is important that site understands and address the reason for union withdrawal.

• S&H is **NOT** a bargaining tool, but a responsibility.
Support Letter

• Sites should provide written documentation to OSHA of either union support or union non-opposition

• Examples of Support Letters may be found at: http://vppcx.org/ under “Mgmt Commit & Emp Involve”
Communication Guides
Communication for Employees and Unions

• OSHA VPP requires that employees be notified about:
  – Site’s participation in VPP
  – Feedback on such items as hazard abatement, industrial hygiene sampling (IH)
  – Rights in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act.

• Union involvement in this communication process is critical to ensure VPP thrives in the workplace.
Union Engaging Tips

- Start early and talk often
- **ALL** Unions need to be in on initial discussions to solicit their support
- Encourage mentorship by including union representation on VPP site benchmarking visits
- Support union attendance at regional Voluntary Protection Programs Participants’ Association (VPPPA) conferences.
Training and Mentorship
Training

• Train union members on such activities as:
  – Conducting safety inspections
  – Investigating accidents/near misses
  – Creating job hazard analysis (JHA) and job safety analysis (JSA).

• Engage union members and other employees in the training process (i.e., peer training).
Mentorship

• Ask union members from other VPP sites to help initiate and develop VPP programs at new sites

• Consider utilizing the VPPPA to assist with union mentorship and support
  – Optimal way to gain appropriate mentor.
Mentoring Activities

- VPP mentoring activities may include:
  - Supporting mentoring workshops
  - Hosting benchmarking visits
  - Offering tips for effective VPP application development
  - Helping analyze problem areas
  - Sharing knowledge of other resources
  - Sharing techniques and preparation strategies
  - Advising mentees.
Benefits of Using a Mentor

• Provide “real world” examples of techniques used to resolve safety and health issues
• Access to resources both at the mentor site and other sites in their network
• Contribute to accelerated culture change
• Ease development and submission of an application.
Employee/Union Involvement
Union Participation in VPP

• Union employees must be involved in at least three meaningful ways in the VPP process such as:
  – Safety committees
  – Hazard analysis” JSA/JHA development
  – Monthly safety inspections
  – Accident/incident investigations
  – Hazard recognition.
Committees

- Consider forming committees that include a membership balance of management and union/labor
- Consider using union members as Committee Chairs
- Make committee meeting minutes available for distribution throughout the workforce
- Consider using committees and sub-committees to perform S&H related tasks such as trending, goal setting, identifying training needs etc.
Employee / Union Involvement

- Unions are built on loyalty
- Union leadership is a conduit for S&H communication
- Create a workable partnership
- Be **FLEXIBLE**.
In this module you learned about:

- Union and management misconceptions
- Participation requirements
- Communication tips for unions and employees
- Value of mentors and training for unions
- Ways to encourage meaningful union and employee involvement.
1. At a VPP Star site, the labor-management partnership forged through VPP results in fundamental changes in the authority of management and unions, and in the collective bargaining process.
   a. True
   b. False

2. Which of the following is not one of the suggested VPP mentoring opportunities for site union representatives:
   a. Serving on safety and health problem solving teams
   b. Attending VPP workshops/conferences
   c. Reporting suspected safety problems to OSHA
   d. Participating in safety and health benchmarking visits
3. Which of the following is true concerning OSHA requirements for site participation in VPP:  (a) written documentation of union support for VPP participation must be provided; (b) union support for VPP participation must be included in the local union contract; (c) a union may withdraw its support for site participation in VPP at any time; (c) if union support is withdrawn, OSHA will re-evaluate continued site participation in VPP?

a. (a), (c), and (d)
b. (a)
c. (b)
d. (a), (b), (c), and (d)
4. Because union representatives can learn a lot by attending Voluntary Protection Programs Participants’ Association (VPPPA) conferences, it is essential that they become VPPPA members so they can attend those conferences.
   a. True
   b. False

5. Allowing union members to participate in accident investigations is an acceptable method of employee involvement, provided information security and employee privacy requirements are met.
   a. True
   b. False