

APWU, Postal Service Sign Landmark Safety Agreement

The American Postal Workers Union and the U.S. Postal Service reached an agreement recently to jointly promote OSHA's Voluntary Protection Programs in every postal facility that chooses to participate.

"The USPS and the APWU recognize the benefit of establishing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Programs at postal worksites," the July 12 agreement says. "The parties agree that jointly promoting OSHA VPP at worksites will enhance worker safety and health."

The agreement endorses the VPP goals to improve safety and health practices at worksites in ways that demonstrably reduce the severity of and number of accidents and on-the-job injuries. USPS worksite managers, supervisors, APWU representatives, and all members of Local Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees will receive training to ensure their comprehension of the OSHA VPP process.

The agreement calls for national-level joint efforts to provide guidance and support to all worksites considering participation in a VPP; to jointly develop and provide a national training program for area and site participants; to assist at the worksite level in opening dialogs about safety and health issues in order to best resolve them; to share innovative processes and OSHA-identified "best practices;" and to review and evaluate the progress of worksites participating in a VPP.

The agreement provides Joint Area support for sites participating in VPP that will include monitoring the process and assisting in the resolution of issues that are brought to light, and reviewing and evaluating VPP site-specific reports. The evaluations will identify "best practices" that will be shared with other local sites.

Any APWU Local that wishes to be involved in VPP is encouraged to do so. To get started, notify Safety and Health Specialist Corey Thompson in the APWU Industrial Relations Department at 202-842-4273.

The Voluntary Protection Program is a long-standing program with a proven record of reducing injuries and illnesses – OSHA data show that the average VPP worksite has a lost-workday incidence rate more than 50 percent below the industry average.

"When a site takes part in a VPP, it strengthens Local Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees as it improves conditions on the floor," APWU President William Burrus said. "We see this agreement as another positive step in assuring that members are provided a safe workplace." He added that OSHA has said it will provide national recognition to locals that successfully implement exceptional safety and health programs.

There currently are 14 USPS facilities in the VPP program.

Hotel Dispute Will Not Disrupt Convention

President Burrus has received written assurance that the APWU will not experience any consequences of a dispute between union-represented workers and management of hotels hosting many of the delegates to the APWU National Convention in Los Angeles next month.

The contract dispute between the union representing downtown hotel workers and their management counterparts had caused concern about the possibility of a strike or

lockout during the 17th Biennial Convention, Aug. 23-27.

Burrus has been in frequent contact with both parties, offering the APWU's support to the hotel workers, and demanding assurances from hotel management that convention delegates would not be subjected to repercussions.

"I received written assurances today," Burrus said July 22. "The convention will convene as scheduled."

COLA UPdate

An increase in the Consumer Price Index in June means that if the adjustment were made based on the fifth month of the six-month measuring period, the sixth Cost-Of-Living Adjustment period under the National Agreement would give employees an annual raise of \$686.

The adjustment, which is subject to fluctuation in the next month of accounting, would amount to a 33 cents per hour increase, which works out to \$26.40 per pay period. The sixth COLA will be based on the July index point and will take effect in September.