



OCWR's Journey to Cal/OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program

Safety Culture
Heather Davis
Rev 6/2025



Outline

- Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) History
- VPP Process
- OCWR's VPP Journey
 - Mentorship
 - Management Commitment
 - Union Support
 - Gap Analysis and Application
 - Focus on Leading Indicators
 - Continuous Improvement



VPP History

- The concept of VPP was developed in California during construction of San Onofre nuclear power plant in 1970s.
- The California Building Trade Council, the National Constructors Association and Cal/OSHA worked together to develop the program in an effort to prevent injuries and illnesses.





VPP History

- This program was initially named Cooperative Self Inspection Program.
- After completion of the project, the result was striking.
- The program was later adopted by Federal OSHA and was renamed as Voluntary Protection Program in 1982.





Cal/VPP Overview

“VPP is an employee owned – management supported, highly engaging safety and health management program that leads to improvements in injury/illness rates, employee engagement and morale, reliability and product quality.”





Facts about the VPP Program



- Improvement in employee morale and motivation to work safely
- VPP sites generally experience 50 -70% fewer lost work-day injuries than an average site of the same size.
- VPP worksites are exempt from OSHA programmed compliance inspections.
- Provides a confidential, non-punitive and cost-effective audit from a true third party (Cal-OSHA) of sites safety & health programs.
 - Enforcement and Compliance vs. Consultation



Relevant Cal/VPP Facts

- 63 total Cal/VPP STAR Sites
 - Only 3 are government or public agencies:
 1. Orange County Sanitation District Plant No. 1
 2. Eastern Municipal Water District Administration & Support
 3. Eastern Municipal Water District Water Operations, Production, and Treatment Division (6 locations)
- Average of 1 -4 years to achieve Cal/VPP Star Award

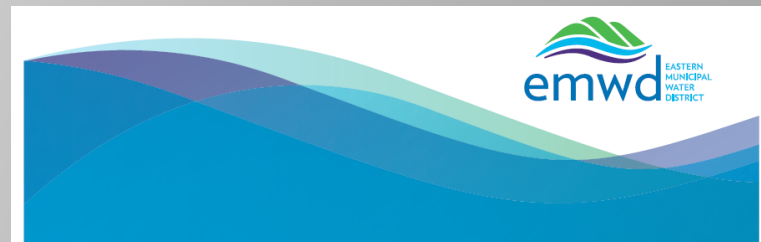


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2023
Contact: Jennifer Cabral, Public Affairs Office | 714.593.7581 | jcabral@ocsan.gov

OC San Receives Cal/VPP STAR Certification

Fountain Valley, CA - The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) is excited to announce that we are the proud recipient of the Cal/VPP STAR certification under the State of California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA's) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP).

OC San has been striving to receive this certification for several years and underwent comprehensive annual audits to qualify for the program. OC San not only received this recognition, but due to our diligence we have earned STAR status, which is the highest level an organization can receive. The program is one of several Cal/OSHA cooperative programs that encourage private and public sector efforts to improve occupational safety and health. Through VPP, Cal/OSHA recognizes workplaces with excellent safety and health management systems and promotes them as model workplaces.



EMWD Earns Cal/VPP STAR Site Certification



Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) is proud to be a national leader in workplace safety and is committed to a culture of accountability to protect our staff, contractors, and communities in everything we do.

EMWD is a member of the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (Cal/OSHA) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) earning recognition as a STAR site. Under this program, EMWD undergoes rigorous triennial recertification to establish its commitment toward continuous improvement and best practices for workplace safety. EMWD first earned the Cal/VPP STAR designation in 1999 and has continually held that honor.



VPP Process: Mentorship

- Required to establish mentorship with an approved Cal/VPP site(s)
- Mentors evaluate and validate site readiness for application submittal
- Mentors help prepare site for comprehensive site evaluation





VPP Process: Gap Assessment



- Understand the requirements of Cal/VPP
- Review existing documentation
- On-site inspection
- Interviews
- Identification of gaps
- Develop corrective action plan
- Prepare application
- Continuous improvement



VPP Process: Application

- Paper application
- 7 Categories
 1. General Information
 2. Management Commitment and Planning
 3. Work-Site Analysis
 4. Hazard Prevention and Control
 5. Safety and Health Training
 6. Employee Involvement
 7. Statement of Commitment



VPP Process:

Cal/VPP Comprehensive Onsite Evaluation

- **The review will include:**

- Verification of the information supplied in the application
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the site safety and health program
- Determine whether the safety and health program adequately addresses potential hazards of the site





VPP Process: Recognition Award & Beyond

- Certificates of approval and flags.
- Approved Cal/VPP sites may also choose to use program logos on such items as letterheads, award items for employee contests or other approved safety and health related promotions.
- Annual reporting
- Triennial re-evaluations





OCWR's Journey Towards VPP

- **OCWR began journey in 2017**
 - Gap Analysis performed by Consultant
 - Standard Operating Procedures
 - Near Miss Reporting System
 - Employee Driven Safety Committee
 - Safety Performance Observation Talk (S.P.O.T.) Checks
 - Safety Program and Training
 - ✓ Lockout Tagout
 - ✓ Confined Space Awareness
 - ✓ Bloodborne Pathogens
 - Root Cause Analyses
 - Expanding Safety Culture Division





Mentorship

- Mentorship established summer 2024
- Manuel Jimenez from Sherwin Williams
 - Performed mock evaluation
 - Observing reevaluation in May
- John Frattali from Orange County Sanitation District
 - Tour of Plant 1





Management Commitment

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Thomas D. Koutroulis, Director
601 N. Ross Street, 5th Floor
Santa Ana, CA 92701
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Management Commitment to Environmental Health & Safety

At OC Waste & Recycling safety is more than a priority, it is a core value. The safety of every person within this organization is critical to effectively delivering on our mission: *to provide waste management services, protect the environment, and promote recycling to ensure a safe and healthy community for current and future generations.* Therefore, as a management team we commit to:

- Hold employee safety integral to everything we do.
- Embrace continual improvement and to protect employees.
- Communicate openly, granting employees reasonable access to top management, and engaging in regular discussions about safety risks and controls.
- Establish safety goals and objectives and evaluate performance by leading indicators.
- Provide resources (personnel, funding, equipment, education, training & time) to achieve goals and promptly address hazards in a manner commensurate to risk.
- Assign responsibility and delegate authority to those performing safety duties.
- Hold contractors accountable for meeting local, state, and federal safety standards.
- Protect employees from discriminatory actions resulting from performing assigned safety duties or reporting concerns.
- Lead by example: follow safety rules, wear required PPE, report near misses, hazards, injuries or illnesses, and attend safety meetings as expected of employees.

We, the undersigned, respectfully submit this statement of management commitment to Environmental Health & Safety in support of OCWR's efforts toward the Cal/Voluntary Protection Program to provide the best possible protection of employees, customers, and contractors.

Tom Koutroulis
Director

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Tom Koutroulis
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Lisa Smith
Deputy Director
Business Services & External Affairs

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Lisa Smith
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David Tieu
Deputy Director Central Region
Landfill & Organics

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Hany Ahmed
Deputy Director South Region
Landfill & Operational Consistency

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Jorge Hernandez
Deputy Director North Region
Landfill & MRF

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Tara Tisopoulos
Deputy Director Environmental
Regulatory Compliance & Sustainability

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Jeff Southern
Deputy Director Safety
Culture & Workforce Development

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Julian Sabri
Deputy Director Compliance Support &
Landfill Technology Regulatory Compliance

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VPP ROAD SHOW TRAVELS TO OC LANDFILLS

The California Voluntary Protection Program (Cal/VPP) is a program run by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA). It recognizes employers who have implemented effective health and safety management systems in the workplace. VPP is an employee owned - management supported, highly engaging safety and health management program that leads to improvements in injury/illness rates, employee engagement and morale, reliability and product quality. Overall, Cal/VPP encourages continuous improvement in workplace safety practices and acknowledges those who maintain a proactive and effective approach to occupational health and safety.



Union Participation

- When applying for the Cal/VPP program, a signed statement indicating that each collective bargaining units do not object to participation and support the program is required.
- OCWR has received letters of support from:
 - Teamsters 952
 - OCEA
 - OCMA



Orange County Managers Association

600 West Santa Ana Blvd., Suite 114-F, Santa Ana, California 92701
(714) 953- 6262 ~ www.ocma.info

Bargaining Agency: Orange County Managers Association

Address: 600 West Santa Ana Blvd., Suite 114-F, Santa Ana, CA 92701

Primary Point of Contact: Stacey McCoy, Executive Director

The mission of the Orange County Managers Association (OCMA) is to represent the over 1,000 managers who work for the County of Orange. OCMA promotes and protects the interests of our members, and workplace safety and health of those members is paramount to our efforts. In an effort to



Eric Jimenez
Secretary-Treasurer
and Principal Officer

LOCAL UNION NO. 952

GENERAL TRUCK DRIVERS, OFFICE, FOOD & WAREHOUSE UNION

140 S. Marks Way, Orange, CA 92868
Phone: (714) 740-6200 | Fax: (714) 978-0576
www.teamsters952.org



John Green
President

Bargaining Agency:	COUNTY OF ORANGE, OCWR
Local #:	TEAMSTERS LOCAL 952
Address:	140 S. MARKS WAY, ORANGE, CA 92868
Primary Point of Contact:	SAM CARLIN, 952 BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE

The primary purpose of Teamsters Local 952 is to effectively promote and protect the interest of our Members. Without a doubt, the workplace safety and health (S&H) of our membership is paramount in our efforts to protect our Members. As the Authorized Collective Bargaining Unit for our Members, we, in an effort to assure a safe and healthful work environment, do hereby agree to participate in a joint commitment with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and County of Orange, OCWR, in the OSHA Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP).



ORANGE COUNTY EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

830 N. ROSS ST., SANTA ANA, CA 92701 • (714) 835-3355 • (714) 835-7654 FAX • OCEA.ORG

Bargaining Agency: Orange County Employees Association

Address: 830 N. Ross St. Santa Ana, CA 92701

Primary Point of Contact: Charles Leon, Labor Relations Representative

The Orange County Employees Association (OCEA) promotes and protects the interests of workers in the bargaining units we represent. The workplace safety and health of those workers is paramount in those efforts. As the Authorized Collective Bargaining Representative for our workers, and in an effort to ensure a safe and healthy work environment, OCEA agrees to participate with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and County of Orange-Orange County Waste and Recycling (OCWR), in the OSHA Voluntary Protection Program (VPP).

OCEA supports the successful implementation of OSHA's VPP and assist our members' participation, subject to the County's assurance that there will be no negative impact to OCEA or to any individual member as a result of that participation.



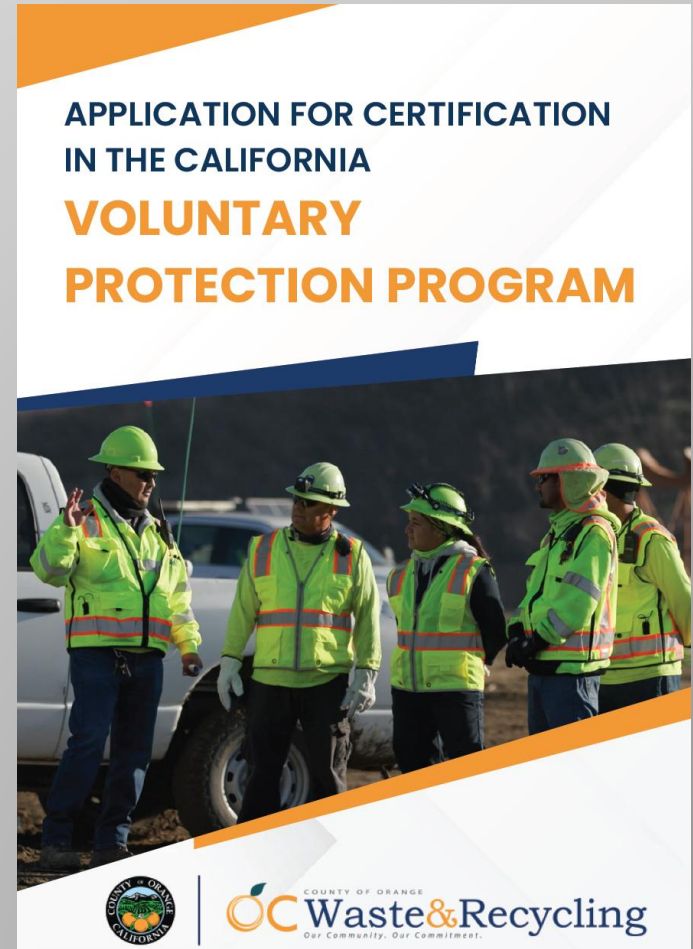
Gap Analysis and Application

- **Gap analysis**

- Performed December 2024
- 19 findings
 - Communication
 - Programs
 - ✓ Job Safety Analyses
 - ✓ Management of Change
 - ✓ Periodic Workplace Inspections
 - Systems/Tools
 - ✓ LOTO and Hot Work Permits
 - Metrics
 - ✓ Personnel evaluations
 - Training
 - ✓ Safety Committee

- **App submitted May 30, 2025**

- Anticipating response Q3 2025





Focus on Leading Indicators

- Leading indicators are proactive, preventative measures that provide insight into the effectiveness of a safety management system before incidents occur.
 - Safety Training Completion Rate
 - Near Miss Reporting
 - Safety Audits and Inspections
 - SPOT Checks
 - Safety Committee Participation
 - Employee Perception Surveys
- **Why they matter**
 - Identify and mitigate hazards before accidents occur
 - Promotes culture of continuous improvement





Driving Continuous Improvement

Our commitment to Ongoing Excellence

- **Job Safety Analyses**
 - Revamped process and prioritized by risk
 - Regularly updated to reflect new tasks and evolving risks
 - Reinforces safe practices through repetition and review
- **Root Cause Analyses & Incident Investigations**
 - Goes beyond surface-level fixes
 - Lessons learned are fed back into procedures, training, and agencywide communication
- **Management of Change**
 - Embedded in all planning and operational changes
 - Ensures evolving conditions don't compromise safety
- **Industrial Hygiene Monitoring**
 - Equipment and training in-house to allow for dynamic sampling and trend analysis
 - Annual monitoring plan based on exposure data, employee feedback, and MOC
- **Much More in Progress**
 - Audits, feedback loops, and KPI's





Thank You

