

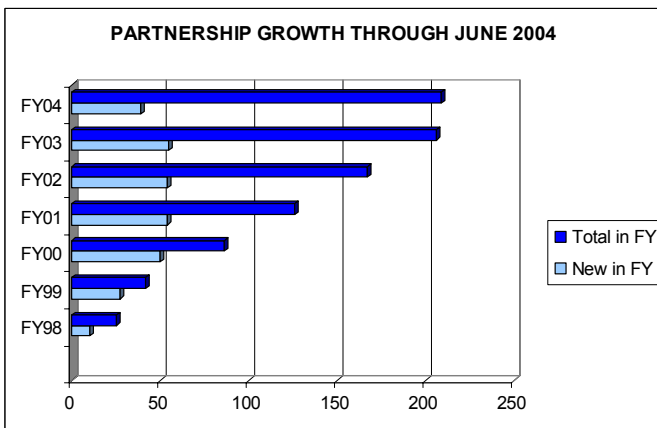
OSHA PARTNERSHIP

What Is OSHA's Strategic Partnership Program?

OSHA's mission is to send America's workers home whole and healthy every day. Traditionally, the agency's strategy has been to promulgate and enforce workplace safety and health standards. With only 1,200 compliance officers and over 7,000,000 workplaces, the challenge is significant.

In contrast, the OSHA Strategic Partnership Program (OSPP) moves away from traditional enforcement methods and embraces collaborative agreements. Through OSPP, OSHA and its partners agree to work cooperatively to address critical safety and health issues. This very different approach is proving to be an effective tool for reducing fatalities, injuries, and illnesses in the workplace.

OSHA Strategic Partnership Growth as of June 2004



How Do Partnerships Work?

Working together, OSHA, employers, and employees identify the safety and health problem they will address and begin to craft a Partnership agreement. The agreement may be national, regional, or local in scope. Partners agree upon individual responsibilities, identify strategies, and establish goals and performance measures to verify results.

Other interested parties, including unions, trade associations, local/state governments, state consultation projects, and insurance companies, are often brought

into the Partnership to contribute their expertise and resources. The resulting agreement maximizes the use of non-OSHA resources to accomplish tasks such as training employees and developing site-appropriate safety and health management systems. OSHA serves mainly as a technical resource and facilitator.

Who Are The Partners?

Partners can be associations, unions and councils, and industries. Partner worksites can be very large, but most often worksites are small businesses averaging 50 or fewer employees. All Partnerships emphasize sustained efforts and continuing results beyond the typical 3-year duration of the agreement. By involving employers and employees in combating the hazards in their workplaces, and by encouraging the sharing of success stories and best practices, Partnerships instill pride and commitment in participants.

Partners

Associations such as ABC, Nursing Homes, and Telecommunications

Unions and Councils such as IBEW, UAW, and Building and Construction Trades

Industries such as Shipbuilding, Meat Packaging, and Landscaping

What Is The Current State Of The Partnership Program?

As of June 2004, OSHA has participated in a total of 319 Partnerships. Of these, 209 are currently open, while 110 have reached their established closing date.

There were 55 new Partnerships during FY 2003—a 24% growth increase. Over 80% of active Partnerships supported OSHA's Strategic Plan by targeting high hazard industries or serious types of injuries and illnesses identified in the plan.

What Makes Partnerships Unique And Innovative?

The Partnership program's most significant feature is its flexibility. This flexibility allows OSHA and its partners to work together to assess a mutual concern and create a customized agreement that will improve worker safety and health in a way that serves the needs of all Partnership participants.

The Partnership program is also unique among OSHA's cooperative programs, in that each Partnership is intended to impact multiple worksites or employers. This is a departure from the focus on individual worksites that characterizes the OSHA Consultation Program and the Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP).

Why Is The Partnership Program Valuable To OSHA?

OSHA and its partners benefit every time a Partnership demonstrates the value of cooperation among employers, employees, and other stakeholders. These experiences are excellent industry models to encourage other employers to take a proactive approach.

Additionally, the collaborative nature of the Partnership program allows OSHA to communicate its message and leverage its resources to reach a greater number of employers and employees more consistently, effectively, and efficiently than ever before. As a result, OSHA's enforcement program efforts can then be focused where they are needed most – on employers who violate the OSH Act and disregard the safety and health of their employees.

"Our relationship with OSHA has never been better. They respect us for the very high standards we've set in the Partnership. So when OSHA comes onto one of our sites, there's no nitpicking. They recognize the effort we're making and we know they have an important job to do, too. We're partners, not adversaries."

Tommy Lee
Safety Director
W.S. Bellows Construction Company

How Has The Partnership Program Impacted Worker Safety And Health?

OSHA's Partnership program benefits workers by reducing their risk of death, injury, and illness on the job, by increasing practical safety and health knowledge and skills, by empowering them to take an active role in their own protection, and by enhancing the quality of their work life.

Over 559,000 employees and 13,000 employers have participated in OSHA Partnerships since the program began in 1998. These Partnerships have addressed serious workplace safety and health issues—the reduction of fatalities, injuries, and illnesses in a myriad of industries. Partnerships have sought to improve worker protection by implementing meaningful safety and health management systems and by tackling occupational hazards such as lead and silica exposure, falls, electrocution, and muscular-skeletal disorders.

How Does An Employer Benefit From The Partnership Program?

The Partnership program benefits employers by helping them develop practical skills to identify and abate hazards and establish effective safety and health management systems. These management systems serve to continually improve worker protections and create a corporate culture that values worker safety as much as production and profit. The Partnership program also offers employers access to technical assistance, educational resources, and training. Employers benefit further from reduced workers' compensation rates and other costs, lower absenteeism, and increased productivity and employee morale.

Through mentoring and the sharing of lessons learned, Partnerships foster enhanced relationships for employers within their industries and communities. Additionally, Partnerships help transform the relationship employers have with OSHA. Instead of viewing OSHA as an adversary, employers within Partnerships learn that OSHA can be a willing listener and useful ally.

ConAgra Refrigerated Foods/UFCW

A key objective of the Partnership was to change the safety and health culture at ConAgra Refrigerated Foods. The Partnership directly impacted 30,000 employees, with an opportunity to indirectly impact approximately 90,000 employees throughout the entire corporation. Additional Objectives included:

- Improving the relationship between OSHA, ConAgra and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)
- Improving overall safety and health in the meat processing industry using the ConAgra "turn-around" story as a model.

The Partnership reported the following results:

- All of the facilities made progress in improving Management Commitment and Employee Involvement. Many of the facilities have implemented new management and supervisor accountability programs, management and union safety committees, ergonomics committees, and VPP steering committees.
- Five facilities experienced a decrease in workers' compensation costs ranging from **42%** to **93%**, with an average reduction of **62%**. Brown N' Serve in St. Charles Illinois, a VPP site, reduced their workers compensation costs by 93%, saving over \$ 200,000 total since 1997.