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Occupational Safety & Health Administration

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Speeches

Safety and Health add value to your Business, Workplace and Life.

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 - **Speaker:** John L. Henshaw
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John L. Henshaw
8th Biennial Governor's Pacific-Rim
Safety and Health Conference
Oahu, Hawaii
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- Good afternoon. I'm really pleased to join you today. Again, thanks to Jim, Jennifer, Nelson and their team who worked so hard to put on this excellent conference.
- Today, I want to talk with you about the bottom line. You've expressed it well in the theme of this conference: "Coming together to preserve life forever."
- All of us as safety and health professionals have our eyes on a triple bottom line: injuries, illnesses and deaths on the job.
- When it comes to a measure of success, we want the lowest possible number. In fact, the only acceptable number is no number at all. It's zero.
- So, today, I want to talk about achieving that success and the progress that we together in the safety and health community are making toward that ideal bottom line of zero.
- First, I want to set the context. The context for all that we do is a simple truth: Safety and health add value. To your business. To your workplace. To your life.
- Focusing on human assets and strong safety and health management systems is a triple win.
 1. Lives are saved.
 2. Businesses save money and maximize returns on investments.
 3. Safe workplaces are productive workplaces where workers with high morale and high motivation produce high quality products and services.
- We have made progress over the past 10 years towards our mission to provide a safe workplace. For example, there's good news on fatalities. Fatalities have declined by more than 10 percent over the past decade. The biggest one-year decline was in 2002, with fatalities declining by 6.6 percent according to BLS.
- Injuries and illnesses are also on a downward trend. Last December, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 4.7 million workplace injuries and illnesses with a rate of 5.3 cases per 100 fulltime workers.

- Because of the new reporting system, which began in 2002, the numbers are not directly comparable to the BLS statistics from 2001. Still, they are lower than the 5.2 million injuries and illnesses estimated for 2001 and the rate of 5.7 cases per 100 fulltime workers.
- Since zero is our goal, we still have a long way to go. But we -- along with the Nation -- have a plan for moving forward.

OSHA Strategic Management Plan

- Last year, OSHA established a five-year strategic management plan focused squarely on the triple bottom line and maximizing the return on your investment as American taxpayers. It's not about measuring activities and racking up citations and penalties. It's about safer workplaces and fewer injuries, illnesses and deaths on the job in the U.S.
- Over the next five years OSHA is committed to working with employers and employees to reduce:
 - Workplace fatality **rates** by **15%**
 - Occupational injury/illness **rates** by **20%**

That is how our success will be measured.

- Our strategies for achieving these goals include a balanced use of
 - Strong, fair and effective enforcement
 - Outreach, education and compliance assistance
 - Partnerships and cooperative programs

The first full year we began this focus was 2002, and the results are promising.

Strong, fair and effective enforcement

- Let's look at each of OSHA's strategies. First, strong, fair and effective enforcement.
- Enforcement serves as the underpinning of everything we do. It must be strong and effective and must produce change where necessary.
- How do we ensure that? By effectively zeroing in on the right workplaces that need enforcement to produce a safe workplace. We do it through national emphasis programs, local emphasis programs and site-specific targeting to focus on high injury and severity rate establishments.
- And by a tough program -- our enhanced enforcement program -- to deal with recalcitrant employers -- those who consciously ignore the law and choose not to provide a safe workplace for their employees. But we cannot be satisfied if our enforcement efforts just produce inspections, citations and penalties. We must produce the necessary change toward compliance and a safe workplace -- a change that is sustained.
- We're also making progress on the standard-setting front by meeting deadlines in our regulatory agenda. We issued three final standards last year, and we are actively

working on more than a dozen other rulemakings. But often times, it's not new standards that can most dramatically impact the triple bottom line. It's compliance with the existing standards that can make the biggest impact.

Outreach, education and compliance assistance

- Outreach, education and compliance assistance is a critical component of our strategy. OSHA's website at www.osha.gov continues to be one of our most popular sources of information. Visits to our website shot up dramatically from 2002 to 2003 - increasing by 150% in a year. We expect to host more than 50 million visitors this year.
- Two new features allow visitors to personalize the site and navigate more easily. MyOSHA lets visitors set up their own page to link to the topics they are interested in. And QuickStart offers a step-by-step guide to identify major OSHA requirements and guidance materials.
- Other strategies include our toll-free helpline and our email news memo, QuickTakes, which now has more than 45,000 subscribers. If you are not among them, please sign up on the website at www.osha.gov.
- Last year, more than 30,000 employers took advantage of the free on-site consultation program for small businesses.
- We have increased the number of OSHA Education Centers, and we're training more and more people on safety and health, including immigrant workers.

Hazard Communication Initiative

- More than 30 million workers in the U.S. at three million worksites are exposed to one or more of the 650,000 hazardous chemical products covered by OSHA's hazard communication standard. Secretary Chao asked me to look into ways to improve implementation of this standard. Recently we studied the compliance problems with this standard and have put in place a process to achieve greater compliance with the existing requirements.
- We launched our hazard communication initiative last month on a new portal page on our website. Our goal is to assist employers in developing effective hazard communication programs.
- Our new webpage includes a draft model training program that can be adapted to worksites that use chemicals and draft hazard determination guidance for chemical manufacturers and importers. Later we'll be posting guidance for preparing MSDSs.
- In addition, as part of our Alliance with the Society for Chemical Hazard Communication, we're developing a course for small business on preparing MSDSs, creating a training program for OSHA compliance staff on reviewing MSDS information and preparing a checklist to use to review MSDSs to be sure they include appropriate information.
- There's also an enforcement component of this initiative focused on material safety data sheets to ensure that they are adequate. And we're developing a guide to the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals to increase public awareness -- a way to improve chemical hazard communication over the long

term.

- Other outreach initiatives coming in the future will focus on injury and illness reporting data quality, trenching and excavation and motor vehicle safety. As you may know, the latest draft of the National Response Plan for the first time lists OSHA as the primary federal agency for worker safety and health. We will add value in supporting worker safety and health during national emergencies.

Partnerships and Cooperative Programs

- Our partnerships and cooperative programs have also increased significantly -- and our plan is to make even more dramatic increases. I am especially pleased that while I'm in Hawaii this week, I'll be participating in several ceremonies to recognize Hawaii workplaces participating in the Voluntary Protection Programs or recognized under SHARP.
- Nationwide, we have 768 small businesses participating in SHARP. This is our recognition program for those who have successfully established effective safety and health systems with the help of our consultation program. I especially appreciate Nelson Befitel's efforts to launch this program in Hawaii. It's perfect for small businesses. I look forward to helping HIOSH increase the number of enlightened establishments that recognize the value of safety and health.
- In addition to SHARPs, we have 214 Strategic Partnerships. Nearly 6,000 employers and nearly 375,000 employees currently participate, including the Pacific Rim Construction Safety Excellence Council. We also have a partnership with the Saipan Garment Manufacturing Association.
- OSHA also partners through Alliances focused on training and outreach. We have 180 of these, including the Hawaii Alliance for Safety and Health and the Guam Alliance for Safety and Health.
- And now we also have 1,069 VPP sites. While I'm here, I'm participating in VPP ceremonies for Dick Pacific, which demonstrated exemplary leadership in construction safety and health and the Frito Lay site, which is the 19th Frito Lay site in the country that has achieved VPP status. They join Chevron Products Hawaii Refinery as VPP sites in Hawaii.
- Nelson Befitel has done a great job moving forward with VPP in Hawaii. One of my personal goals has been to find a way to greatly expand Voluntary Protection Programs in every state because it is the most effective way to assure a safe and healthful workplace.
- VPP has a lot to offer. Companies in VPP have injury and illness rates more than 50 percent below the averages for their industries. That's because they go beyond OSHA requirements by making safety an integral part of their company culture. Innovation and creativity -- finding ways to do the job better and more effectively, which by cultural definition includes safety and health -- occurs each and every day in these workplaces.
- That's why we want to encourage more worksites to join VPP -- to produce these results. We will be piloting a new program soon -- OSHA Challenge. It's a roadmap to safety and health excellence. It will be run by administrators from outside the agency and include three stages of participation with increasing levels of commitment and

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performance. The program is designed to assist those who want to advance safety and health, realize value and continuously improve. We'll begin with pilot projects soon.

- We're also introducing VPP Corporate, a streamlined application and approval process for companies with multiple sites under similar management systems that want to bring sites into VPP.
- And finally, we have VPP Construction. We're redesigning VPP to better fit the unique aspects of the mobile construction industry. We're developing this program based on our short-term and mobile workforce demonstration programs. I hope to announce the new VPP for construction mobile sites very soon.
- In closing, as we look at the safety and health landscape in 2004,
 - the good news is that we have made great strides in improving workplace safety and health.
 - the reality is too many workers are hurt or made ill or die in the workplace.
 - the mission is to use every tool we can in enforcement, outreach, assistance and partnership to collaborate with every organization interested in worker safety and health to produce the greatest reduction in our triple bottom line and the maximum return on our investment.
 - Because our vision is zero injuries, illnesses and fatalities on the job.
- OSHA is not just a regulatory agency any more. We are a safety and health agency -- working to assure compliance with safety and health laws and assure that workers have, to the extent possible, a safe and healthful workplace in which to work.
- And I know we have hundreds of thousands of folks in the country focused on the same thing. OSHA wants to work with and partner with those who have the same compassion for people, the same drive to succeed and the same focus on results -- the triple bottom line.
- I know that by working with each and every one of you -- together we can create a safer and more healthful work environment while strengthening this country's economic base.
- The American worker -and our economy - deserve our very best.