

Voluntary Programs: More Oversight Needed?

Each and every occupation has certain dangers that require workers to remain alert. Whether it is working in a manufacturing facility or working on a construction site, it is important for employers to notify employees of the hazards that they may be facing. Injuries can prove costly for workers, even if they are eligible to receive [workers' compensation benefits](#).

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the agency responsible for creating rules that help to keep workers safe. The agency has implemented a "Voluntary Protection Program," which can mean that a factory or facility will not be subject to OSHA inspection if the company complies with rigid requirements.

The VPP requires that companies adhere to safety methods that are generally above federal limits for their chosen industry. Companies in the program must keep low injury and illness rates to continue to be part of the VPP.

Recently, members of Congress have expressed some concern regarding OSHA's role in the program, specifically the agency's lack of oversight powers. Since the participating companies are exempt from OSHA inspection, the companies themselves are responsible for ensuring that proper procedures are being followed.

Supporters of the VPP believe that it saves a lot of money and time, and is a critical component of workplace safety. Companies believe that this allows them to build partnerships between employers, employees and the agency to create long-lasting safety plans.

OSHA may be required to take a more proactive role in the future. Currently, companies in the VPP may go three to five years without an inspection, which some believe is too long of a time period. Those part of a VPP will be closely monitored to determine if they continue to see lower numbers of workplace injuries and illnesses.

Source: EHS Today "[House Hearing Praises OSHA's VPP, Stresses Need for Program Integrity](#)" Laura Walter, June 29, 2012.