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OSHA ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF ITS VOLUNTARY PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") of the U.S. Department of Labor recently expanded its Voluntary Protection Program (the "VPP"), which promotes and recognizes outstanding efforts in workplace health and safety, to reach out to small businesses and the construction industry. The VPP establishes cooperative relationships between management, labor and OSHA at workplaces with implemented safety and health management systems.

The VPP expansion is divided into three initiatives:

- **Challenge-** This initiative is designed to reach companies needing assistance in developing safety and health programs and who are willing to commit to workplace safety. This affects small businesses in particular, as it provides more focus and support to small businesses and offers recognition and other incentives for undertaking safety improvements.
- **Construction-** This initiative is designed to give mobile and short-term construction sites the same recognition for incremental improvements as fixed-site employers receive. OSHA will develop and implement the construction industry initiative next year.
- **Corporate-** This initiative affects corporations committed to the VPP by streamlining the application review and evaluation process. It also attempts to eliminate redundancies in the application process for corporations with multiple facilities.

The initiatives will not affect the current structure of the VPP program. VPP worksites typically have lost workday incident rates of 52% below the industry average, according to OSHA statistics, which in turn reduces workers' compensation premiums and other costs.

For more information about OSHA's expansion of the VPP and how the program could benefit your business, please contact a member of our OSHA Practice Group.

OSHA Practice Group E-Newsletter is an electronic publication of the law firm of Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c., and is prepared by attorneys in its OSHA Practice Group. This publication is intended to afford timely notice to our clients and friends of current events in OSHA regulations and to provide general information about OSHA issues. It is not intended, nor should it be used, as a substitute for specific legal advice regarding particular factual situations.

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