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Staying Safe While Making Money: A Discussion of the Award Winning Safety Program at the Department of the Treasury

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Introduction

The Department of the Treasury is one of the most unique Departments in the Federal Government. It is there that money is manufactured and many of the financial policies for the nation are set. The risks that are faced by Treasury employees are diverse and include manufacturing machinery, hazardous materials, ergonomic challenges, and vehicles.

In 2007, Treasury won awards for having the largest decreases in injuries and illnesses (including lost time injuries) of any Department or major office in the Federal Government. This achievement was possible through aggressive goal setting, management support, collaboration, and identification and minimization of hazards. This paper will discuss an overview of the Department, specific requirements for Federal Agencies, and the approach that Treasury takes for managing safety that resulted in this award winning program.

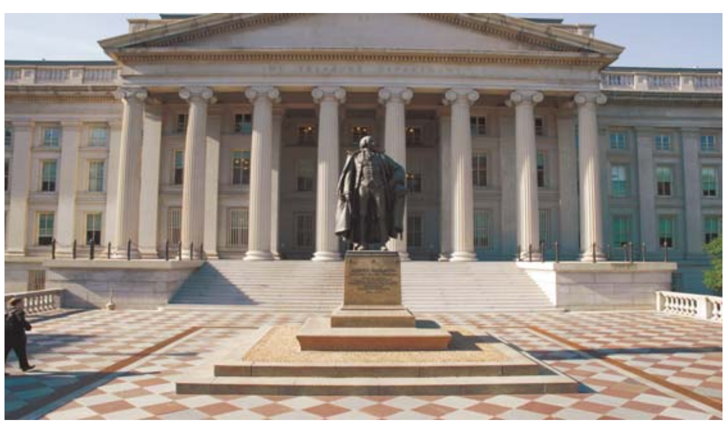

Exhibit 1. View of the front of the Main Treasury Building in Washington DC

Overview of the Department of the Treasury

The Department of the Treasury is a distinct Departments in the Federal Government. Its history goes back to the beginning of our nation, and Alexander Hamilton was the first Secretary. Treasury's main office is located next to the White House, but it has facilities throughout the country.

Treasury's mission is to promote economic prosperity and ensure financial security for the United States. As such, the Department conducts a wide range of activities, including advising the President on economic issues, producing money, and collecting revenue and the borrowing of funds necessary to run the federal government. In order to conduct these activities, Treasury consists of Departmental Offices, and the operating bureaus. Departmental Offices largely reside at Treasury Headquarters in Washington, DC and is primarily responsible for formulating policy for the Department as a whole, while the operating bureaus carry out the specific operations assigned to the Department[1]. There are 12 bureaus within Treasury, which collectively make up 98% of the workforce. These include the Internal Revenue Service (the largest bureau with 86% of Treasury's workforce), the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and the U.S. Mint.

Bureau	Mission	Workplace Description/ Hazards
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	Determines and collects revenue	Offices, warehouses, laboratories, fuel storage tanks, sewage treatment plant
Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP)	Designs and manufactures paper money and certificates	Manufacturing equipment (e.g., printing presses, plating, cutting machines), hazardous materials, power plant, offices
U.S. Mint	Manufactures coins and commemorative medals	Manufacturing equipment, hazardous materials, offices

Table 1. Mission and Workplace Description of Treasury's Largest Bureau and Manufacturing Bureaus

The development of Department-wide policy is centralized, while the implementation of such policies is decentralized. The Environment, Safety, and Health staff at Treasury Headquarters in the Departmental Offices is responsible for developing policies (in conjunction with input from all the bureaus) and assuming a coordinating role for issues that transcend a particular bureau. Each of the bureaus has environment, safety, and health groups responsible for developing bureau-level policies and implementing Department-wide policies. The size of these groups varies within bureaus based on the size and mission (and therefore, hazards) present.

Federal Agency Safety and Health Requirements

Federal Agencies use general industry and construction guidance, the 1910 and 1926 series in the Code of Federal Regulations, like the private sector. However, there are specific regulations and

[1] www.treasury.gov

expectations in place for government agencies. Section 19 of the original Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970 requires the heads of Federal Agencies to provide safe and healthy workplaces, require the use of safety equipment, and record injuries and illnesses. Federal agencies are also required to submit an annual report to the Secretary of Labor, through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). This report ensures frequent communication between Federal Agencies and OSHA, and allows OSHA to require that information be provided for special emphasis areas, such as seat belt use and procedures for workplace violence. OSHA also requires agencies to report their injury and illness rates, as measured by the Office of Worker's Compensation Programs at the Department of Labor.

Executive Orders are issued by Presidents to make domestic policy. Executive Order 12196 reaffirmed and expanded the requirements for Federal Agencies that appeared in the original OSH Act, and also established the Federal Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health, or FACOSH. FACOSH is made up of 16 management and labor representatives from agencies, and advises the Secretary of Labor on administering federal occupational safety and health programs. When CFR Part 1960 was promulgated, it added more specifics to requirements for Federal Agencies. It laid out supervisor and employee responsibilities, codified expectations for health and safety inspections, discussed training requirements, and outlined specifics for recordkeeping and reporting. (Recordkeeping requirements were updated in 2004 to be more in line with the requirements for the private sector.)

One of the most recent requirements for agencies started in 2004 when President Bush launched the Safety Health And Return to Employment, or SHARE initiative. SHARE set a standard group of safety and worker's compensation metrics that Federal Agencies were expected to achieve, based on their performance in the baseline year. The four goals were:

- Reduce total case rates for injuries and illnesses by at least 3% per year;
- Reduce case rates for lost time injuries and illnesses by at least 3% per year;
- Increase in the timely filing of injury and illness notices by at least 5% per year;
- Reduce the rates of lost production days due to injuries and illnesses by at least 1% per year.

Agencies are scored with a red/green system to visually indicate success in meeting their goals. The government as a whole is accomplishing the goals set forth in SHARE. (Figure 1)

AGENCY	GOAL1	GOAL2	GOAL3	GOAL4
All Government, less USPS	●	●	●	●

Exhibit 2. Performance for the Federal Government in the four share goals[2].

SHARE was initially set up as a three year program to cover the time period from 2004 through 2006. Based on the success of individual agencies and the government as a whole in lowering injuries/illnesses and improving timeliness in filing worker's comp claims, President Bush has extended the program through 2009.

[2] Source: www.dol.gov/esa/owcp/dfec/share/perform.asp?filename=summary.asp

Elements of Treasury's Safety Program

As mentioned previously, the SHARE initiative established targets for Federal agencies to achieve in the areas of safety and worker's compensation. For the first three years of the SHARE initiative, Treasury received the award for reducing injuries and illnesses, including those resulting in lost time, more than any other Federal Agency. Treasury achieved this milestone by applying the basics - management commitment, aggressive goal setting, solid programs, identification and removal of hazards, and collaborative efforts - across all bureaus in tangible ways that produced real results.

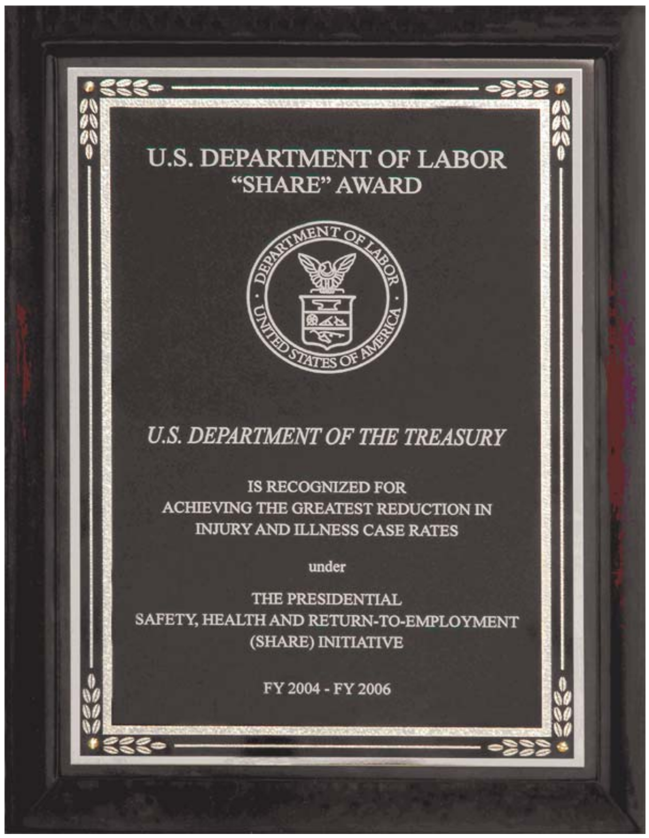

Exhibit 3. Treasury aware for decreasing injuries and illnesses more than any other Federal Agency for the First Three Years of SHARE

Management Commitment

Even though the core mission of the Treasury Department is to literally make money and set policies to manage the currency, Treasury has also committed to having strong health and safety programs. In the Strategic Plan that was in place even before the SHARE program commenced, Treasury noted that promoting safety, health, and environmental protection for the workforce was one of the key means to achieving the goal of strengthening workforce management to ensure commitment to excellence[3]. The plan discussed the upstream measures of communicating health and safety information to the workforce, conducting site assessments and behavioral operations evaluations, and developing programs to reduce injuries and illnesses. Measures for success included the reduction in lost production days and injury and illness rates.

Like most Federal Agencies, Treasury develops and communicates internal policies through a series of Directives. Directives lay out the objectives to be accomplished by all bureaus and establish responsibilities for managers and employees. The Departmental Safety and Health Program Directive sets several expectations for the leaders of the bureaus and Departmental Offices to establish and maintain effective safety programs, commit management at all levels to support these programs, provide sufficient safety staff and other resources, and ensure that injury and illness information is recorded promptly and analyzed accordingly. Another important expectation is that bureau heads will evaluate supervisors, managers, and other employees on their performance in meeting safety and health program requirements. This focus on manager's performance appraisals is one of the best ways to ensure that they fully support health and safety efforts.

Aggressive Goal Setting

The goals associated with SHARE include reducing injuries and illnesses by at least 3% per year from the 2003 baseline. This is the goal in place for the government as a whole; however, the Department of Labor allows agencies to set more aggressive goals if they wish. The Treasury Safety and Health Council decided to double the governmental-wide goal and set a target of reducing injuries and illnesses, including those serious enough to result in lost time, by 6% each year. Setting a higher goal of injury reduction, that was supported by management, allowed Treasury to focus efforts more intently and pushed the Department even further and faster in injury reductions.

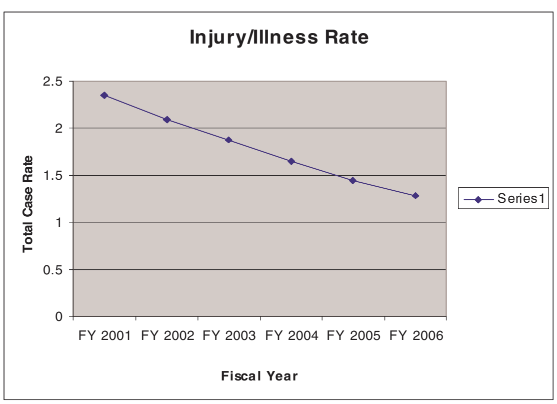

Exhibit 4. Total Case Injury and Illness Rates

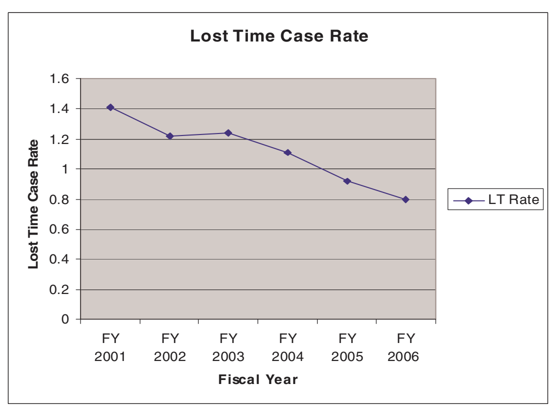

Exhibit 5. Lost Time Rate Trend

[3] The Department of the Treasury Strategic Plan for the fiscal years 2003-2008.

Identification and Removal of Hazards

Obviously, simply setting aggressive goals is not enough. Resources must be focused on removing, minimizing, and mitigating hazards. Treasury has made a concerted effort in recent years to eliminate, as much as possible, hazards from processes. Chemical reduction plans have been in place at both the U.S. Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to minimize the use of hazardous materials in manufacturing. Also, the IRS (the largest bureau) has made great strides in removing hazards through re-design and changing work practices. The IRS has increased automation of some IRS field examination and collection work. Much more follow up work is conducted by phone, which has decreased the risk of vehicular accidents as agents to not need to conduct as many in-person visits.

The IRS has undertaken a tremendous effort to address ergonomic issues in the last five years. With the increase in electronic filing of income taxes, the ergonomic hazards associated with moving large volumes of paper have decreased. The bureau has replaced a significant number of outdated workstations with ergonomically adjusted systems, including function-based modular furniture. This new equipment can adapt to different tasks and variances in size and shape of the worker to avoid injuries. Preliminary estimates are that approximately 54% of current workstations fully meet ergonomic and function-based standards. Replacement plans for the remaining furniture, as expressed in both work plans and financial plans, should increase the number of enhanced workstations by 4-5% each year.

Collaborative Efforts throughout the Department

Treasury realizes that one of the cornerstones of safety is effective communication and collaboration. As mentioned previously, management commitment is key and is communicated through strategic planning and Department-Wide Directives. The Directives lay out expectations, including rating managers on their safety performance. Treasury also promotes frequent and meaningful communication across bureaus by having regular meetings of the Safety and Health Council. The meetings are well attended, and specific issues discussed in an effort to work collaboratively to solve them. Past speakers at meetings have included the Director of the Federal Agency Programs at OSHA and the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Topics at recent meetings have included refreshers on recordkeeping requirements, upcoming areas of emphasis for OSHA, and preparation for the possibility of a Pandemic Flu outbreak.

Conclusion

Treasury is a unique Federal Agency with part of its core mission to “literally” make money. It is made up of various bureaus with different hazards. The Department has aggressively sought to decrease injuries/ illnesses by applying the foundation of good safety programs with commitment leading to real results. Management commitment, strong expectations for safety performance, programs to identify and minimize hazards, and collaboration efforts all play a role Department in success. By continually focusing on and supporting these areas, Treasury is committed to stay safe, while making money.