

# VPP Star Status in Two Years

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## Dr. Anthony R. Buhl, Ph.D. (Engineering), Registered Professional Engineer

- Dr. Buhl has led many successful turnarounds of major projects and organizations, with special emphasis on facilitating changes in their safety cultures. He has provided technical and executive support to small businesses, large corporations, and Federal agencies for more than 30 years. He served as the corporate site-wide ESH&Q Vice-President at two large high risk DOE closure sites-Rocky Flats and Hanford. He has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of a public company that provided management consulting, engineering, and software development. He also was CEO of a private company that offered environmental restoration and risk assessment products and services. He has served on several corporate boards.
- In 1997 he co-founded EnergX, LLC, a small, veteran-owned business supporting the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and electric utilities nationwide from four regional locations. He continues to serve as President and CEO today. Dr. Buhl has served as a Senior Executive at both the DOE and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). He was the first Director of Risk Assessment at NRC. He has led many complex independent oversight assessments of high risk projects and activities that led to major safety culture modifications. He was a member of the first Emergency Response Team at the Institute of Nuclear Operations (INPO).
- Dr. Buhl was in the control room throughout the recovery from the accident at TMI. For 5 years, Dr. Buhl managed the Industry Degraded Core Rulemaking (IDCOR) Program, the power industry's response to the accident at Three Mile Island. A USA consortium of 63 electric utilities, NSSS suppliers and architect-engineering firms supported this international program. The program was supported by Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Sweden, and Taiwan. IDCOR established comprehensive, integrated, well-documented, and technically sound positions on all issues related to severe accidents in commercial nuclear power plants and thus provided the basis for industry participation in their resolution. He served as the industry spokesman with the NRC to resolve severe accident issues --- cultural, hardware and infrastructure. More than 100 experts and operators supported IDCOR which became part of the baseline for the cultural evolution of the nuclear power industry.
- He also supported the recovery efforts and safety evaluations in Russia following the Chernobyl accident. He has visited 39 countries.
- In 1985, he was elected a Fellow of the American Nuclear Society for his contributions and expertise in safety, risk assessment and risk management.



# Our Path to the VPP Star

- DOE on-site VPP initial assessment  
Merit awarded 1 year later



- Brought in VPP mentor (ORAU)
- Established VPP Steering Committee to address all previous findings
- Performed a candid, honest self-assessment

# Employee Involvement is the Heart of VPP

- TWPC management focused on increasing workforce involvement in everything.
- The management team challenged itself to get employees more involved in planning, assessing, and continually improving all aspects of TWPC performance
- Management actions focused on:
  1. increasing employee involvement and
  2. good management practices and behaviors that promote employee involvement



# Increasing Worker Awareness and Involvement

## **We listened to workers:**

- Safety Conscious Work Environment survey
- Collective Significance Analysis on overall performance
- “Managing by walking around” and listening and acting on information from the workforce

## **Workers conducted the VPP self-assessment:**

- Workers participated in following up on the findings.



# Involving Workers:

- Monthly all hands safety awareness events
- Conducting a safety stand down based on trends of small (not reportable) events in the context of Human Performance Indicator (HPI) behavioral expectations
- Greatly increased worker involvement in work planning, work site assessment, feedback and improvement, and training:
  - Workers were already part of pre- and post-job analysis – management and supervisors acted to further increase worker participation
  - Workers Trained in Safety Inspections (Specific Program)
  - Workers Perform regular (weekly) safety inspections
  - Established Multiple Safety Committees
    - Emphasizing worker participation
    - All committees chaired by workers



# Encouraging More Worker Involvement

- Performance improvement feedback sessions involved all site personnel.
  - Asked open-ended questions about how TWPC could improve performance
  - Listened to the answers, and took actions to correct and incorporate these into our processes



# Creating the Environment that Promotes Worker Involvement

- Organizational effectiveness training for Senior Managers improved Management interaction with the workforce
  - increased Management awareness of how their behavior affected improvement initiatives
- Meyers-Briggs self awareness training for managers and supervisors to improve listening, communication, and understanding
- Consultive Management training for supervisors and managers to improve acceptance and use of feedback from everybody
- Established “Voice Box” (employee suggestion boxes) to encourage worker input to safety committees for resolution and provided feedback
  - Results shared (management feedback)
- Newsletter – Communication to keep workers involved



# Checking Our Progress

- VPP Mentor's assessment of TWPC progress
- Performed a candid, honest self-assessment of safety using the DOE/VPP self-evaluation rating criteria to evaluate how our efforts to build worker involvement were progressing
  - Engaged workers at all levels in the assessment teams and 70% of the workforce was interviewed
  - Involved the entire workforce in improvement
- We found many opportunities for improvement.



# Final Steps

- Involved workers in
  - Determining how to respond to the opportunities for improvement
  - Implementing Changes
  - Providing feedback on effectiveness
- Confirmed that TWPC performance and behaviors were consistent with VPP Star Status



# SUCCESS

TWPC 2009 VPP Star



less than two years after  
beginning our journey



In parallel, TWPC achieved  
ISO 14001 Certification  
in only five months,  
with no findings!



# VPP is About Employee Involvement

- Employees must participate in the management process.
  - Work planning, assessment, improvement, training, etc.
- Management sets the stage for employee involvement.
  - Managers must listen and take action on what they hear from workers.
  - As managers act on what they hear, performance will improve.
  - Listening and acting create a positive feedback and a focus on continuous improvement.
- VPP is promoted by the same factors that characterize a well functioning, high performing organization.
- Management Leadership is about establishing and maintaining the environment that enables worker participation.

