

# **WORKER OUTREACH**

## **Looking Backward and Forward**

### **Worker Outreach Work Group**

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# Work Group History

- Worker Outreach work group formed in February 2007 to review the worker outreach program, including:
  - NIOSH and contractors' approach to organizing meetings
  - Conduct of meetings, and
  - Impact of the information gathered on DR, site profiles, and SEC petitions
- Work Group initially attended various DOL and NIOSH outreach meetings
- First Work Group meeting – Feb 2008
  - Overviews of NIOSH and SC&A outreach activities
  - “Worker Outreach” was defined as a formal program within a broader context of outreach activities
  - Program in transition from ORAUT subcontract to direct OCAS/DCAS contract. ATL continued as Worker Outreach program contractor.

# Common Values and Goals for Outreach

(Program concerns consistently expressed by NIOSH, Board, SC&A)

- Diversity – Seek input from a broad, representative population.
- Completeness – Capture input from all venues for consideration.
- Verification – Provide opportunity for review of meeting minutes and interview notes to assure authenticity of information recorded.
- Parity – Consider and investigate information/concerns based on merit and significance, regardless of venue or source.
- Communication of impact – Participation influenced by perceptions. Can workers see that their input is taken seriously and has an impact on DR and SEC recommendations?
- Effective use of resources – Above goals are pursued in context of a larger program, in balance with other priorities and constraints.

# Mission Statement and Evaluation Objectives

- Charter mission statement approved by Board in 2009:
  - ...to evaluate the effectiveness of NIOSH activities in obtaining and making use of information from current and former workers and their representatives... includes monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of NIOSH sources of assistance to assure this information is available to as many potential EEOICPA claimants as possible.*
- Four evaluation objectives:
  - 1) Is DCAS taking appropriate measures to solicit worker input?
  - 2) Is DCAS obtaining and documenting input from workers?
  - 3) Is DCAS giving thorough consideration to information received from workers?
  - 4) Is DCAS effectively communicating information to workers?
- Feb 2010 Board meeting
  - Work Group focus on Objectives 1-3
  - Defer to DCAS' internal 10-Year Review, "Quality of Service," in place of Objective 4
  - Separate effort to log & track public comments presented to Advisory Board

# Work Group Activities (2007-present)

- Reviews of Worker Outreach program procedures, in conjunction with Procedures Subcommittee (Obj 1 & 2):
  - ORAUT-PROC-0097 (Issued 2005. Reviewed 2007.)
  - OCAS-PR-012 (Issued 2009. Reviewed 2010.)
  - Issue matrix was used in Work Group comment resolution
  - DCAS-PR-012 , Rev 1, issued Dec 14, 2012
- General principles guiding assessment of Objective 3
  - Goal to improve outreach procedures and work products
  - Sampling approach, not continual or comprehensive monitoring of entire program
  - Evaluate consideration of issues, not agreement/disagreement with NIOSH position
- Site-specific reviews of outreach inputs and disposition (Obj 3):
  - Rocky Flats Plant (Pilot Review 2011-2012)
    - Broad scope of topics and outreach/input venues
    - 101 comments (selected by statistical sampling)
  - Los Alamos National Laboratory (2013-2014)
    - Topics directly affecting DR/SEC recommendations
    - 78 comments

# Lessons Learned

- Site reviews have provided a means to validate the implementation of worker outreach procedures and management systems.
- Empirical use of actual examples has supported collaborative, productive discussion of issues related to outreach program implementation.
- Most issues raised by commenters are reflected, as least in a general sense, in NIOSH communications and work documents.
- However:
  - Resource intensive and not timely
  - Retrospective reviews measure what “was,” not what “is.” This blurs the connection between review results and current opportunities for improvement.
  - “Performance” reviews require documentary evidence; spurs defensiveness
  - Evolution of outreach program and advent of Ten Year review actions have overtaken original Work Group implementation plan.

# Revise Work Group charter?

- Original mission statement from 2009; progress achieved, changes made:
  - PR-012 revision addresses procedure-specific issues from 2007 and 2010 reviews
  - Ten Year Review actions
  - Effective tracking system for Public Comments to the Board
  - RFP and LANL site-specific reviews completed
  - NIOSH initiative to capture comments from multiple venues in a central application
- Work group's initial evaluation objectives largely accomplished; discussing new path-forward
- What is the current level of satisfaction and confidence regarding common values and goals for outreach?
- How to apply lessons learned and address remaining opportunities to work with NIOSH to strengthen worker outreach?

# Some ideas

- Move away from comprehensive, site-specific reviews toward more “real-time” observational ones in conjunction with NIOSH outreach activities. For example, provide feedback based on participation in:
  - SEC outreach meetings
  - DOL/NIOSH information meetings
  - Interviews and focus groups
- Select specific issues for focused work group follow-up and review
  - Worker-raised concerns regarding NIOSH responsiveness
  - Referrals by Board (full or WGs)
  - WOWG selected based on work group meeting discussions
- Continue to follow progress and provide input as NIOSH develops a new application responsive to the remaining matrix issues from PR-012 review
- Define clear roles to facilitate collaborative consideration of progress being achieved on Ten Year Review “quality of service” issues related to communications with workers, claimants, and petitioners
- Solicit regular feedback from workers at Board meetings on how communications are handled and whether comments or issues are being addressed in a timely manner