

**HSS/Union Meeting To Address  
Aging Workforce and Strategic Initiatives  
November 6, 2008**

**Integrated Executive Summary and Final Action List**

**Background:** HSS and the labor unions who participated in the initial 2007 HSS Focus Group meetings agreed to a path forward in which various unions combined to form core working groups to address union identified health and safety issues by topical area.

The following is an overview of actions/activities identified in the November 6 HSS/Union meeting to address DOE and interrelated national issues and concerns related to Federal acquisition and contracting, institutionalization of a safety culture, human capital sustainability, and maintaining the U.S. industrial base.

**1. Coordinate, increase and improve individual and combined efforts to recruit and sustain a skilled workforce.**

- Improve integration/coordination of efforts/activities among the unions to identify, communicate, improve and/or develop programs to support succession planning
  - Investigate active model apprenticeship/journeyman programs [i.e., Oak Ridge, Hanford] and collectively work to improve existing, and/or develop, programs to mirror successful/model programs. *[Unions/DOE Stakeholders]*
  - Collectively work to develop and align recruitment and training programs to a younger workforce. *[HSS/EFCOG/Unions]*
    - Identify ways to improve education and communication in marketing efforts
    - Investigate benefits (e.g., medical) to encourage career interest
    - Assess training portability to respond to mobile workforce *[Unions/NIEHS]*
  - Collectively work to invigorate and engage the support of industry, State, Local and Federal organizations/agencies through incorporating expectations for succession planning through standards and requirements. *[HSS/Unions]*
  - Collectively work to develop/enhance worker retention plans and programs to maintain and/or transfer institutional knowledge of trades/crafts. *[Unions]*
  - Identify representatives to attend February 17-18, 2009 National Academy of Science Conference on Aging Workforce. *[Unions/NIEHS/HSS]*

**2. Collectively investigate demographics and retirement issues associated with laborers and assess improvements.**

- Assess benefits program improvements impacting health and retirement needs of aging workers and corresponding direct and indirect cost savings
  - Identify improvements to, and inconsistencies in, existing policies that do not address/provide for reasonable accommodation among an aging workforce. Focus on trades (e.g., protective force, fire fighters, emergency responders) with fitness for duty requirements, physical fitness requirements and for which there is no reasonable accommodation due to the nature of the job.
  - Identify change agents and pursue standardization of retirement policies that are consistent across DOE and with industry best practices.

- Investigate, identify and develop a wellness program model. Collectively work to improve and/or develop proactive wellness, fitness and prevention programs through data collections and assessments on wellness (injury and illness/prevention) and identify subsequent program improvement needs and cost savings. *[HS-10/HS-30/NIEHS/IAFF/Unions]*
- HSS will expand its current site communications efforts to ensure implementation of 851 Rule provisions for medical personnel at DOE sites to identify/mitigate illness and injury. *[HS-10/HS-40]*

**3. Collectively work to ensure implementation of health and safety programs (851 Rule) within and among DOE site contractors to eliminate/minimize inconsistent requirements among Management and Operating, Management and Integrating, Limited Liability Company and Small Business contractors and subcontractors.**

- Ensure health and safety plans are in place and flow-down among all contractors/subcontractors through oversight, communications, awareness and education.
  - Institute a consolidated Service Center for Health and Safety. *[HSS]*
  - Senior Management and DOE contractor communications: 851 Rule affirmation through HSS correspondence to all DOE contractors *[HSS-Glenn Podonsky – sent 11/05/08]*; communicate and solicit support through meetings with DOE Under Secretaries. *[HSS-Glenn Podonsky]*
- Collectively work to develop a unified safety culture and worker portability through site-wide standardized worker health and safety training. *[HSS/Unions/NIEHS/HAMMER]*

**4. Invigorate corporate sustainability through outreach and collaboration.**

- Educate and collaborate through Visiting Speaker Program *[HSS]*
  - Panel discussion/presentation focusing on the status of and future challenges to strengthening the U.S. industrial base *[HSS/Labor/Industry/Academia/Federal Agencies]*

## **Aging Workforce and Strategic Initiatives DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY**

The following reflects an overview of the meeting discussion points:

### **Human Capital Sustainability: Aging Workforce Issues/Resolutions**

- The IBEW reported that the challenges of an aging workforce was a focal area of discussion at a recent Metal Trades Department conference: The large population of “Baby Boomers” are retiring, the demand for recruitment, retention, mentoring, apprenticeship and journeyman programs is critical to maintaining a skilled workforce.  
The IBEW is currently looking at their apprenticeship programs across the country and will also focus on legislation in Federal contracts as part of an effort to ensure requirements to maintain a skilled workforce. Current succession planning does not address Defense contracts or reflect nuclear efforts. The Department of Defense [DoD] contracts include language requiring mentoring programs to ensure transfer of institutional knowledge including some high end specialty skills. [*Chico McGill to provide HSS with information on DoD*]
- Tom Schaffer proposed modeling an effective apprenticeship program at Oak Ridge that is run by affiliate unions.
- IBEW is looking to establish a special counsel to investigate and provide recommendations on improving apprenticeship, journeyman and mentoring programs and appropriate incentives for retirement.
- In response to a question about DOE internship programs, HSS reported that the programs are set up internally, not Congressionally, and vary by individual Office.
- CPWR noted their current struggle to attract workers to apprenticeship programs. Reasonable accommodation for the aging workforce was identified as a challenge for the building and construction trades.
- The IAFF reported an active apprenticeship program for Fire Fighters at Hanford that includes both formal, and, on-the-job training. The program is being worked to make it portable state-wide (Washington).
- IAFF discussed the issues fire fighters are facing with regard to retirement age at Hanford. As with all emergency responders, the job is physically demanding. In addition, the workload has increased, but the capabilities are declining, as a significant number of fire fighters are reaching retirement age. Of particular concern is that the retirement age for fire fighters at Hanford is not aligned with the lower retirement age of the Protective Force and fire fighters at other sites. DOE mandated fitness requirements for fire fighters in 2002; however, there are no subsequent DOE standard requirements for the retirement age for fire fighters. Exacerbating the issue for fire fighters, there are no opportunities for reasonable accommodation, and short staffing precludes opportunities for voluntary separation.
- IAFF proposes that retirement age for fire fighters should be standardized site-wide and aligned with other physically demanding occupations for which there is no reasonable accommodation.

- CPWR announced the upcoming NIEHS/National Academy of Science workshop to address health and safety needs of older workers on February 17 – 19, 2009. Workshop participants include AARP, CPWR and DoD. CPWR invited DOE to co-sponsor the event. *[HS-10 to follow up with CPWR]*
- HSS Office of Injury and Illness Surveillance developed a report [Worker health Summary, 1995-2004] of their analysis of illness and injury rates and trends among workers at DOE sites over the past decade. The data reveals “changing health patterns in a specialized and skilled but aging work force; older workers are becoming a large percentage of the work force; absence rates for diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are increasing”. The report can be found at:  
[http://www.hss.energy.gov/HealthSafety/IIPP/hservices/epi\\_surv.html](http://www.hss.energy.gov/HealthSafety/IIPP/hservices/epi_surv.html).
- IAFF shared their experience in a proactive approach to fire fighters’ wellness programs that they feel has proven to be more successful in decreasing illness and injuries than mandated requirements. Housing a central data collection system, the IAFF contends that upfront costs of prevention have proven actual cost savings in the long term. Additional experience has demonstrated that “prevention” and “early intervention” are cornerstone to wellness and fitness initiatives; confidentiality; and non-punitive, but mandatory participation are key to the success of the program.
- HSS reported that some sites are taking the initiative to take a closer look at/benchmarking wellness programs. In addition, HSS is discussing wellness initiatives at several sites as part of the broader mandate of the 851 Rule in which medical personnel are required to identify and mitigate injury and illness.
- HSS proposed that the common theme for worker health and safety program improvements is a financial one – throughout the 2008 meetings it is evident that improvements in worker health and safety programs (training and prevention) are needed. With a universal shortage of resources/funds, along with competitive missions, HSS contends that it is imperative that organizations partner and become more creative to meet the needs of improvements for worker health, safety and security. There is a need to re-evaluate all of the current programs to ensure they are vital in supporting health and safety needs. HSS is committed to marshalling efforts and exploring how to address the challenges in a collective and collaborative way.
- CPWR proposes that the cost savings in reducing injury and illness may provide the funds to support needed areas of improvement and referred to the HSS Worker Health Summary Report in showing contractors how to get workers back to work.
- Both the Metal Trades Department and the IAFF pointed out the cost effectiveness and efficiencies derived from the portability of skills.

### **Impacts of Federal Acquisition and Contracting**

- Metal Trades Department proposes the need for consolidation with regard to number of prime and subcontractors within DOE sites, reporting 12 contractors at Hanford and 8 at Oak Ridge, both with tiers of subcontractors to enable a unified safety culture.
- IAFF and USW agree that reconsolidation of contractors and re-emphasis on standardized training is necessary to ensure worker health and safety at the DOE sites.
- Both HSS and Union representatives recognize the relative challenges and issues presented by the potential caveats of SBA contracts.

- Recognizing this issue, HSS is committed to doing more work through awareness and guidance, to ensure that every contractor meets the health and safety requirements of the 851 Rule, that required health and safety plans are in place by all contractors.
- HSS Office of Worker Safety and Health reported they are currently working on a recommendation for a centralized Health and Safety Service Center that would provide a consolidated service assistance for implementation of 851.
- HSS also reported a letter just sent from Glenn Podonsky to all site contractors communicating 851 requirements, how it is enforced, the responsibility of the contractor that the workers are informed, and with the overall intent to ensure vertical integration of the Rule. In addition, it is a priority item in discussions/communications with senior level managers (Under Secretaries and Program Secretarial Officers).
- HSS is working with NIEHS in developing cooperative agreements to support a collective effort in the areas of worker health and safety training and analysis.
- IAFF reported a successful Near Miss Program as a result of reaching out and partnering with the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and emphasized the importance of “leaving your comfort zone to get things done.” They contend that “if it’s a priority, it gets done.”
- USW reported the experience of contractors using behavior based assessments for near miss convictions that works to stifle reporting, and contends that focus should be on the hazards, not the people.
- HSS proposed the value in taking a look at industry success and offered the shared experience of industry representatives participating in the HSS Visiting Speakers Program would be a resource for learning.
- CPWR contends that a safety culture is driven by top level managers and to think in terms of this not behavior based safety.
- Based on lessons learned and the example of fire fighter injuries due to not using seat belts, the IAFF contends that it is not an issue of giving choices, but one of requirements and accountability.

HSS made the following closing announcements:

1. HSS encouraged the union representatives to review, identify and prioritize the areas and actions that have been identified in the 2008 HSS/Union topical working group meetings [refer to the 2008 topical meeting integrated action summaries] and communicate these to the topical union leads in preparation for the December 4 wrap-up meeting. The December 4 wrap-up will serve to identify HSS/Union worker health and safety improvement priorities and applied resources necessary to support the activities.
2. HSS announced the January 12, 2009 HSS Visiting Speaker Program will be a panel discussion/presentation on the state of the U.S. industrial base. In addition to AFL-CIO representative, Ron Ault, the panel will be comprised of representatives from Northrop Grumman Corporation, Lockheed Martin Corporation, SPIE, and the National Academy of Public Administration.

A recap of actions from this meeting discussion are provided in the upfront *Integrated Executive Summary and Action List*.

The intent of the meeting summary is to focus on the gist of the meeting discussion, with an attempt to capture the essence of all the representatives stated and the tasks to be completed to implement the path forward in addressing and resolving identified issues. The meeting summary in no way captures all of the data and dialogue from the meeting.

Note: Informational materials related to the HSS/Union Focus Group/Topical meetings, as well as the HSS Visiting Speakers Program can be found on the HSS Public Outreach Website at: <http://www.hssoutreach.doe.gov/>