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Georgia-Pacific in Toledo honored for workplace safety

The Department of Consumer and Business Services, Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) renewed the VPP Star Award status of Georgia-Pacific's pulp and paper mill in Toledo on June 16th in recognition of their ongoing commitment to workplace safety. The Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) is a workplace safety-and-health-management program that encourages employers to voluntarily meet rigorous workplace safety standards to protect workers and reduce injuries.

In 1996, the Georgia-Pacific Toledo mill was among the first employers to participate in the Oregon Voluntary Protection Program. The mill earned its five-year re-certification as a VPP Star site following a safety-and-health review by Oregon OSHA earlier this year.

To achieve VPP status, a worksite must have a three-year-average-injury-and-illness rate at or below the rates of other employers in the same industry. The worksite undergoes an extensive Oregon OSHA review of workplace conditions, safety records, employee safety-and-health programs, and regulatory compliance. The review includes Oregon OSHA interviews with employees. Evaluators review 19 program elements, including management commitment to safety, employee participation, self-inspection, safety-and-health training, emergency programs and drills, and preventive maintenance. VPP employers are removed from Oregon OSHA's routine scheduled inspection list for the duration of their participation. Employees do not lose any rights under the program. Oregon OSHA still investigates accidents, formal complaints, and chemical spills.

"VPP sites are recognized as safety-and-health leaders," said Peter De Luca, administrator of Oregon OSHA. "VPP changes the traditional relationship between industries and Oregon OSHA, and Georgia-Pacific's Toledo operations are among a select group of over 1,000 sites in the United States."

There are currently nine VPP sites in Oregon. The other VPP sites are DPR Construction Ronler Acres Project in Hillsboro, Frito-Lay Beaverton, Georgia-Pacific Coos Bay mill, Georgia-Pacific Philomath mill, Kerr McGee Chemical in The Dalles, Marvin Wood Products in Baker City, PW Eagle in Eugene and Timber Products Spectrum Division (TP Spectrum) in White City.

For more information about VPP, contact Mark Hurliman, Oregon OSHA VPP/SHARP program coordinator, (503) 947-7437.

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