

## California's Safety & Health Stars

# One of the “Safest Refineries in the World” Recertifies as VPP Star Site

BENICIA – Given the intense scrutiny Cal/OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) team gives its prospective and ongoing Star sites, compliments aren't exactly a routine matter. But at the Nov. 19 celebration of Valero Benicia's recertification in the program, VPP Manager Iraj Pourmehraban gave the oil refinery the highest plaudit he could.

Not only is the refinery one of the safest in California or in the United States, he said, it is one of the safest in the world.

Company officials returned the favor. “VPP is a core component in our process safety and culture,” said Kirk Saffell, vice president of health, safety and environment for the Texas-based oil company.

The Benicia site is one of only two oil refineries to have qualified for Cal/VPP, and the other is its sister facility in Wilmington, near Los Angeles. “Safety is our highest priority,” Saffell says. “Partnering with Cal/OSHA in the Voluntary Protection Program is one way to demonstrate this commitment to our employees, contractors, community and to regulatory agencies.”

All told, Valero has 10 Star sites across the country and 25 contractors who also have qualified for national and state programs. Two California Valero contractors are VPP-certified — Kinder Morgan and ThyssenKrupp Safway. A handful of others are in the application process or about to submit them.

The Benicia facility also has taken a lead role in mentoring other potential VPP sites, an effort credited to VPP Coordinator Terry Schulte and the refinery's safety staff.

Chris Lee, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) deputy chief for enforcement, noted that the facility's injury and illness incident rate is 60% below the industry average, and the days away/restricted duty/transfer (DART) rate is 66% below the average. “Valero goes the extra mile,” he said, noting the refinery's “outstanding” preventive-maintenance program. The site, which will embark on a “turnaround” in the next couple of months, has gone more than 6.5 million worker-hours without a lost-time injury.

Lee also mentioned Valero Benicia's commitment to its host city. “You are fully engaged [and] a part of this community,” he said. Members of Valero's Community Advisory Panel and local officials attended the recertification ceremony.



*Valero Benicia's VPP team listens as Cal/OSHA enforcement honcho Chris Lee (center) lauds the refinery. From left to right, Vice President and GM Doug Comeau; Director of Health, Safety, Environment and Government Affairs Chris Howe; Safety Manager Rick Morgan; SNAP Facilitator Dave Frank; VPP Coordinator Terry Schulte; Technician Theresa Gray; Safety Specialist Steve Blotzer; Lead Safety & Industrial Hygiene Specialist Dave Matthews; and Safety Staff Office Assistant Dian Aldrich.*

Valero's safety program includes policies and procedures, and ongoing training. Its Life-Saving Rules reinforce expectations, and focus on safety building blocks. A key component to its safety program is SNAP — Safety Needs Active Participants — a “no names, no blame” behavioral-based safety program. “We actively practice safe behaviors, learn to identify barriers to safety, and stop at-risk behaviors,” Saffell says.

He also lauded the “high level of competence” of the refinery's safety and health staff. “They are a frequent resource to local and national safety groups, in addition to being a resource for Cal/OSHA,” Saffell said.

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