

VPP ... where do we place our priorities now?

by Lesley Guerin

The Marshall Center is in the midst of re-evaluating its project priorities, just as many of us are doing in our personal and work lives. While Marshall confronts the issues of how to best use its resources to accomplish organizational goals, the recent attack on America and the ensuing war on terrorism have prompted us to examine similar issues on a personal level. From both standpoints, one inevitable question arises: "Is shooting for the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Star still important enough to us that we want to devote our resources to accomplishing that goal?"

As a community, the Marshall Center struggles to cope with the reality that we currently do not have more than enough people to do the work we want to do. With little prospect of major increases in the size of our workforce, we strive to make the best possible use of the people we do have, and to allow them to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of their personal and professional lives.

The success of our VPP initiative is predicated upon the part-time efforts of volunteers and appointees whose regular duties and responsibilities remain unchanged. It also demands an "up front" investment from every Marshall community member, to verify and assure that their contributions to the Safety, Health, Environmental (SHE) Program not only meet all regulatory requirements, but surpass the national standard for excellence and innovation in worker protection programs.

As individuals, we have long struggled to cope with the many competing demands for our time and attention, resisting the stress responses created by that situation. While the pressures of recent current events call into question our personal values and priorities, they have also introduced new stresses and fresh obstacles into our personal and professional lives. Why would we now choose to maintain our organizational and personal

commitment to qualifying for a VPP Star? Consider the following:

- Marshall places its highest value on the people who are the Marshall community — that will not change.
- The SHE Program is our program for worker protection, with or without the VPP effort.
- Each Marshall community member shares responsibility for shaping the evolution of our SHE Program, so that it effectively identifies and controls hazards in our changing workplace.
- Not one of us wants to see or be responsible for another person being harmed on the job.
- Research indicates that thorough hazard analysis and planning, followed by implementation of hazard controls tailored to the individual work process or project, consistently result in time and cost savings accompanied by gains in product and service quality.
- The Voluntary Protection Program is for organizations capable of not only meeting all applicable OSHA requirements, but of creating innovative strategies for excellence in people protection, as well — no one is better qualified to achieve this than we are.
- It's a matter of community pride to demonstrate that Marshall can meet the unending challenge of developing people- and environment-friendly work processes capable of satisfying our customers with consistently high quality levels.
- Acceptance of the VPP Star is a commitment to stay on the leading edge of worker protection technology, and to serve as a national model — Marshall belongs in that role.
- The best service we can offer our country may be to assure the optimal use of Marshall "people resources" to achieve NASA's national and global missions.
- We need every member of our community to be healthy, safe and able to devote their full abilities to performing Marshall missions.

- Is protection of our own workers a worthwhile and patriotic cause?
- What do you think?

The Marshall community will continue its efforts to "Shoot for the Star." "The goal we are striving for is the safety of each person on the Marshall team, and that includes both civil servants and contractors," said Axel Roth, Marshall associate director. "The VPP Star Certification is something that affirms this to our families and customers."

The writer, employed by Hernandez Engineering Inc., works in Marshall's Safety Office.

