

# ON THE GRID

VPP Power Generation



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Regional Safety Manager  
Vistra, Corp.

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# THE SGE EXPERIENCE

## **SGE: Special Government Employee**

"I completed the SGE Course in August of 2021 in Indianapolis, IN. I was excited to get out there and perform my first activity as an SGE. My plan was to do several on-site audits a year somewhere close to my home in the Cincinnati area. While I did want to get on an SGE on-site evaluation team, work became busy and before I knew it, it was December. I was never going to get the SGE experience if I didn't find an SGE activity that would work for me and get it on my calendar. Through the SGE website, I found OSHA was looking for an SGE to assist with an on-site evaluation of a new VPP applicant. They had an office in Columbus, OH and Dayton, OH which worked well for me since I live in Northern Kentucky. I learned that this was a

Mobile Workforce applicant with several construction jobs currently underway across Ohio. The coordination for my work was simple; I worked directly with the OSHA Compliance Assistance Specialist who was leading the audit team. They were great to work with and we communicated often prior to the site visit.

It was a bitterly cold morning in January when I met the team in Columbus. We met the company's safety director and management team. My first impression was very good. The office was well organized, and I immediately noticed some of the safety items I would expect to see including an AED, first aid kit, and fire extinguishers in plain view. The management team provided us with a safety orientation and showed us some of the methods they use to manage safety at their remote work sites. They had a warehouse located in the facility with their office space. We toured the warehouse and found that everything was just as it should be. I noticed their warehouse shelving had clearly labeled weight ratings, the aisle ways were marked and clear of obstructions, and all the fire extinguishers were placed correctly and not blocked. I did notice an electrical panel that had an open hole that was not blanked. I mentioned this to the safety director who immediately corrected the safety concern.

They had two projects they were working on in the Columbus area, both addition construction projects. As we drove into the first construction site, I could see this was a large project with scores of construction workers from different companies. As we met with the general contractor, I couldn't help but wonder how they felt about OSHA being there even if it was just to look at one of the many contractors on their project. I knew we were there only to audit the specified company, but it was difficult to look past all the other



activities at the work site. We didn't see anything considered imminently dangerous, but we did help identify several opportunities for improvement. I had to keep in mind that I was just there to audit the specified company and not the entire project. We met the company foreman who briefed us on the project. The foreman was a young man in his mid-twenties and very knowledgeable of his project. He had four employees who were installing cable trays and running low voltage wires. The foreman showed us the area where they met each morning for their tailgate meeting and review the plan for the day. He also informed me that they perform flex and stretch each morning prior to starting work. Their meeting area was simply an open space in the newly constructed parking garage. They had several job boxes that housed equipment and supplies and another that held their safety gear including first aid kits, fire extinguisher and a safety binder. The safety binder included the daily safety topics, the daily pre-task briefs, and safety audit forms. After seeing the meeting area, the foreman took us to the two areas where they were working that day. The first work area had two company employees working from ladders installing cable trays in a narrow corridor. I asked the foreman if I could interview the two employees. I took five minutes talking to each employee. Neither had been on this project for long, less than two months. They were aware of the company pursuing the VPP Star program and they did have some basic knowledge of what VPP is all about. They couldn't answer questions like "name the four elements of the VPP Program," but they did understand that employee involvement was a big part of it. One thing I was pleased to hear from both employees was their ability to bring up safety concerns and have them addressed. They shared an example where one of their ladders was found to be bent during a pre-use inspection and the foreman had a new one brought that day before lunch. They also shared that the safety director is on site regularly



and is very approachable. The on-site audits went very quickly as we looked at the small slice of the overall project. We spent less than an hour total at that site. The process was similar at the other construction sites we audited in Columbus and the Dayton area. At the end of the on-site, we found that the company was well prepared, and we recommended them to become a VPP Star Mobile Work Force company. The experience was great for me as I helped OSHA complete an onsite assessment, made new networking connections, and learned a few things from how another company manages safety. I look forward to doing another VPP site evaluation in the future!"

*John Coudry, CSP, SGE*

SAFETY REGIONAL MANAGER  
VISTRA CORP.



# SAFETY IDEA

## SAFETY DATA SHEETS

HAZCOM is always one of OSHA's top cited violations year after year. Why not make it easy for workers to access Safety Data Sheets? One idea is to use a hard hat sticker like the one pictured that has the phone number and website to the company that stores your Safety Data Sheets. You could go a step forward and have a QR code on the hard hat sticker that takes you straight to your SDS website.





# Get to Know

## **GREG WILHELM AT ONTELAUNEE POWER VISTRA CORP**

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### **What Company do you work for and what is your title?**

Ontelaunee Power Operating Company, LLC. Vistra Corp.  
Maintenance Planner/Safety Committee Chair

### **How did your work background / education lead to involvement with VPP?**

Back in the mid to late 1990's I was working as a maintenance mechanic for Wheelabrator Frackville, PA, a power station burning waste anthracite coal, called culm. I was also a member of the safety committee. The plant decided to become an OSHA VPP Star site and I was tasked with correcting some deficiencies like caging on ladders, ladder gates, grating and other forgotten items. At the time I didn't see what all the fuss was about. With the easy work done I learned about the four principles of VPP. What caught my attention was Employee Involvement – that's what I was doing when I did the corrective maintenance on the ladders and such and being a part of the Safety Committee.

In the fall of 2001, I left Wheelabrator to start work at a nice clean gas fired power plant being constructed for Calpine located at Ontelaunee, Pa. After three years we submitted our VPP application to OSHA. June 2005 Ontelaunee became the first Calpine plant to



become an OSHA VPP Star facility. At the time, I was on the Safety Committee, but it was run by the plant management. The plant was sold in 2006 and there was a management change. Less than a year later we were sold to Dynegy. With that we went to an all-volunteer safety committee with me as the Committee Chair. During this time, we received Safety Committee training from Pennsylvania's Department of Labor & Industry. This training consisted of safety committee operations, hazard detection and prevention, and incident identification and prevention. 2007 was the first year I was responsible for the annual VPP self-assessment, it fell on me because there was no one else. To piece the assessment together, I held meetings with management and hourly employees together and we jointly completed the assessment. How was I to know that's how you're supposed to do it?! We have been doing it that way ever since.

I have gone to a couple national and a couple regional VPPPA conferences. These are great venues to pick up and share information on safety A to Z. What an eye opener and learning experience. We try to send someone to both the national and regional conferences every year and every year we learn something new.

Summing it up, I got a lot of on the job training.

### **How do you support VPP at your company?**

By example. Walking the walk. By using my PPE, asking questions when I don't know the answer. Listening during our safety committee meetings. I don't consider it my job to solve all the issues that are brought up during our meetings but listening and understanding gets us on the pathway to why it's an issue and from there we all can solve it together. I also try not to be a filter.



I am constantly surprised by the ideas and discussions from fellow employees when they get the rest of the story.

### **What benefits have you seen while working with VPP sites / aspiring VPP sites?**

Before COVID-19 put a damper on travel we were visiting other Vistra sites and called it Fresh Eyes. The idea of the program was for each plant to send representatives to the other plants for the purpose of reviewing each other's safety programs. The program gave an opportunity to learn from each other, but also to review plant processes with a set of "fresh eyes" to see if there are opportunities for improvement. It also presented an opportunity to meet employees from other plants. Not only were safety ideas and suggestions shared but also ideas related to operations and maintenance. One of the biggest take away was having an electronic LOTO and permitting system. This past year our LOTO station was moved to a new location where it would not interfere with other operations. Additional TV monitors showing the status of the various work permits and LOTO's were installed in the permit area and control room. This old dog learned a new trick.

### **What would you like to see in future PG VPP meetings or newsletters?**

It's always interesting, for me anyway, to see other's best practices.

### **Is there anything else that you would like to share?**

A little more background. I am the luckiest man I know. January 24, 2002, I had an auto accident. During the beginning of the morning rush hour my vehicle crossed 4 lanes of traffic hit a ditch and went air borne going over a bridge and landing 50 feet below. I believe the tie rod broke causing the accident. One commuter stopped and called 911 for help. She and her husband got a free dinner on me.



I went by ambulance to Lehigh Valley Hospital where I was diagnosed with a spinal cord injury at the C6 C7 level. I am paralyzed from the nipple line down with no use of my fingers and no use of abdomen or legs. A world-renowned spinal surgeon operated on my neck which gave me use of my triceps. Can't do a lot without those. Next went to a rehab facility. There I saw a gentleman in the same boat as me. His wife left him. Without my wife I would not be here today. She dresses me, helps me into my power chair, feeds me, showers me, and turns me every few hours at night. I like it medium rare. After rehab hospital I got back to scouting as the Scoutmaster. Those boys treated me as if nothing happened – greatest feeling in the world. Had another year and a half of outpatient rehab before was ready to go back to work. I did learn to drive and own a Dodge van with hand controls. First time drove was like being 16 again. Before the accident I was a maintenance mechanic and loved it. When I came back, I began managing our maintenance management system called Maximo. Corrective maintenance work orders, preventive maintenance work orders and the preventive maintenance program. Then I was given Contractor Safety Orientation, there sat the contractors and in I roll in a power chair – priceless! Got the Safety Committee Wheelchair job and here we are. I am very grateful for the opportunities I have been afforded, not many disabled are working let alone contributing to the wellbeing of so many.





# VPP ELEMENTS

**MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP AND  
EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT**



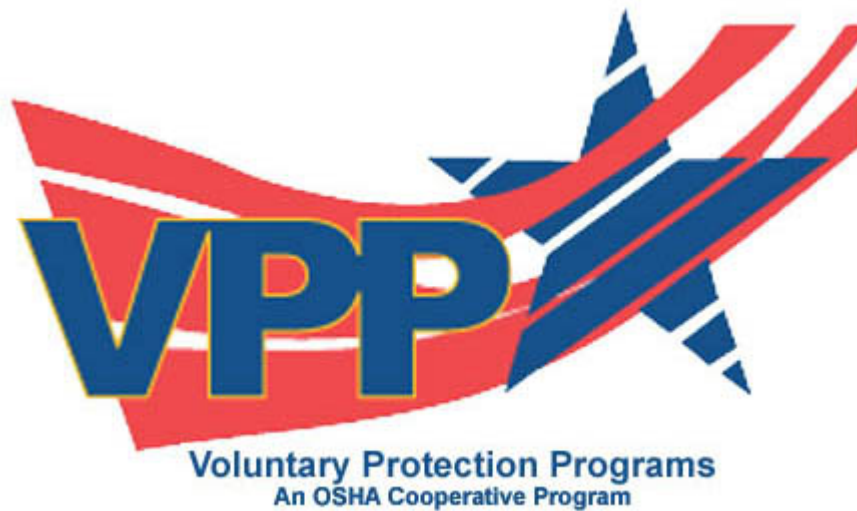
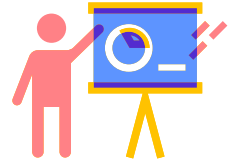
**WORK SITE ANALYSIS**



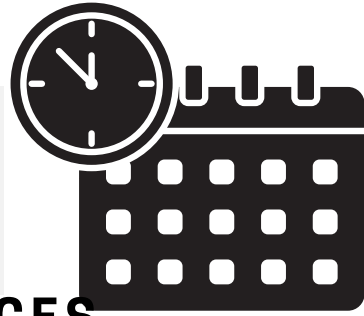
**HAZARD PREVENTION AND CONTROL**



**SAFETY AND HEALTH TRAINING**



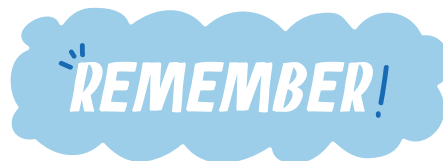
# UPCOMING EVENTS



## VPPA CONFERENCES

**NATIONAL - AUGUST 23-25, 2022 WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**REGION I - JUNE 21-23, 2022 KILLINGTON, VT**  
**REGION II - TBD**  
**REGION III - MAY 8-13, 2022 HERSHEY PA**  
**REGION IV - JUNE 7-9, 2022 BIRMINGHAM, AL**  
**REGION V - JUNE 13-16, 2022 SANDUSKY, OH**  
**REGION VI - MAY 23-26, 2022 SAN ANTONIO, TX**  
**REGION VII - OCTOBER 17-19, 2022 DES MOINES, IA**  
**REGION VIII - MAY 2-5, 2022 IN CHEYENNE, WY**  
**REGION IX - APRIL 26-28, 2022 HENDERSON NV**  
**REGION X - MAY 10-12, 2022 BOISE, ID**

**Q1 2022 POWER GENERATION VPP QUARTERLY  
MEETING FEBRUARY 17, 2022 @ 1:30 (CST)**



**If you have articles for the newsletter, please contact Courtney Robinson at [courtney.robinson@luminant.com](mailto:courtney.robinson@luminant.com).**

**If you would like to volunteer for a Safety Moment or VPP element presentation at one of our quarterly meetings, please contact Kelli Heflin at [kelli.heflin@onwardenergy.com](mailto:kelli.heflin@onwardenergy.com) or Alex Miller at [alexander.miller@vistracorp.com](mailto:alexander.miller@vistracorp.com).**

