

Thank you Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Woolsey and members of the subcommittee for inviting me on behalf of the Voluntary Protection Participants Association (VPPPA) to testify before you today and for all your efforts on behalf of working Americans everywhere. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude that you have taken the time to highlight the tremendous impact that the Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) have had for approximately one million workers like myself across the United States through the combined efforts of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, management and labor.

I work as a process technician for LyondellBasell in Channelview, Texas. This is a very large chemical processing facility with about 2,000 employees. We manufacture and process a variety of chemicals which are used in countless products by consumers across the globe. We have been a participant in the OSHA VPP program for nearly twenty years. Management leadership and employee involvement, worksite analysis, hazard prevention and control, and safety and health programs, which are the elements of VPP, have been a major reason why the Channelview facility is one of the safest places in the world to work. In fact our YTD Total Recordable Injury Rate (TRIR) is about a 0.30. This is approximately 8 times better performance than the chemical industry average of 2.4 based upon the Bureau of Labor and Statistics latest information.

VPP is about developing a culture of safety and health excellence, actively safeguarding personal lives and livelihoods and also those of your coworkers, family and community. Cooperation extends beyond the worksite to include industry and community outreach. The culture and mindset of our employees is that everyone that enters our facility will go home at the end of the day as safe and sound as when they arrived. Safety is truly the number one priority. Anyone in our plant has the right and obligation to stop and question anything that they feel may lead to an injury or unsafe condition. This not only applies to LyondellBasell employees, but to all of our contractors as well.

Participation in the VPP program has allowed our safety and health programs to be driven by the employees. Everyone has the opportunity and expectation to participate in a variety of ways. Management has provided us with all the tools and training materials we need to not only perform our jobs safely, but to also recognize potential hazards and take action to eliminate the problem before an accident occurs. As an operator in the field, I have been given the authority to initiate and execute the shutdown of a unit, without any fear of reprisal from management, if I feel that the safety and health of me or my coworkers may be in jeopardy. This is the culture that exists at a VPP site.

There are many values of the VPP program and not enough time to discuss them all today. I would like to share a success story with you today about a major U.S. company as told to me by the safety and health manager of the New England branch. It had been determined that this branch was to be shutdown and relocated overseas where production costs were cheaper. Today, this operation is still open for business in the same location. The reason for this is due to a reduction in workers compensation costs brought on by participation in the VPP program. It became cheaper to produce their products in the United States rather than overseas. The Voluntary Protection Program not only saves lives, but saves jobs as well.

The spirit of cooperation between OSHA, Management, and Labor which is the foundation of the VPP program, has been an extraordinary success. Those who choose to participate are leaders in safety and health and are proactive in protecting workers. I had the opportunity last week to hear a speech from an OSHA officer at the Region IV VPP conference in Chattanooga Tennessee. He made a comment that I would like to quote. He stated that “if my children had the choice of working at a VPP site or a site where OSHA had made compliance visits, he would without a doubt, recommend the VPP site.”

I want to thank you once again for inviting me to be here today. I hope that you will support VPP program’s continued success.