

## **MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR**

### Health & Safety Topic #8: Workers' Compensation

As much as we dislike paying any kind of insurance, we also never want to experience a catastrophic event in order to collect. The Federal Government's worker compensation program is the largest self insurance program in the world, and compared to other insurance programs is the most economical, with only 4 percent administrative costs charged by the Department of Labor.

NASA's workers' compensation costs are about half the Federal average. Just last fiscal year, we made significant strides by bringing down our workers' compensation costs over 19 percent from the previous year, saving the Agency \$1.2 million taxpayer dollars. Because of our existing safety and health culture and the awareness of our fellow employees, in general the accidents we have are much less severe when compared to all Federal employees. The bottom line is that fewer of our co-workers were injured this year than last. That is a great start toward our goal of zero accidents. Johnson Space Center, Goddard Space Flight Center, Stennis Space Center, and Langley Research Center are setting the standard for the best safety records. Proactively managing claims, Johnson has demonstrated it is possible to reduce workers' compensation costs year after year.

NASA will not be world-class in safety until we are also world-class in the management of workers' compensation costs. Each Center must review all cases and find meaningful work for those who are on long-term workers' compensation rolls. Providing prompt medical care and returning our colleagues to appropriate, productive work as quickly as possible serves both the employee and NASA well. Most importantly, we must reduce accidents.

### **NASA Actions**

#### Principal Center

- Provide Department of Labor workers' compensation periodic reports to Centers -- Ongoing
- Work with Personnel to optimize return-to-work policy -- In progress
- Track timeliness of Center submission to Department of Labor -- Ongoing
- Report on Agency wide trends in workers' compensation cases -- Ongoing
- Track workers compensation Federal Worker 2000 trends -- In progress
- Provide guidance on reporting new Department of Labor lost production day metric -- Completed

## NASA Centers

- Communicate with Center employees regarding the expectations for timely reporting of all occupationally related injuries or illnesses.
- Hold supervisors accountable for the timely completion of workers' compensation required forms.
- Renew priority on safety, accident prevention and accident investigations.
- Decrease number of days away from work due to occupationally related injuries and illnesses.
- Increase efforts to provide modified duty and job accommodations.
- Implement proactive return to work policy, providing work consistent with medical restrictions.

## Background

NASA will implement goals of Federal Worker 2000, a Presidential Initiative designed to reduce injury rates by 3% annually or 15% over the next five years. The NASA baseline will be to maintain our 1997 rate throughout the next five years. The baseline data for this measurement is fiscal year 1997. The Department of Labor (DOL) NASA statistics are:

### Measurement - 1997

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Total Number of Employees: 20,270  
Total Injury/Illness Cases: 257  
Total Injury/Illness Rate: 1.27  
Lost Time Injury/Illness Cases: 116  
Lost Time Injury/Illness Rate: 0.57  
Fatalities: 0