



Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13)



Strategic Business Plan

November 2003

**OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH and
ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS (13)
STRATEGIC PLAN**

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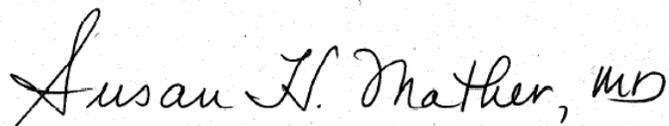
PREFACE

I am pleased to introduce the strategic plan for the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) exists to care for a very special population: those who have served in our Nation's military. There is no more important mission. Within that population of veterans, there are groups with special needs. Some of these come within the responsibilities and concerns of this Office and are the focus of our Strategic Plan. This Plan summarizes how the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards will carry out VHA and VA goals and objectives.

Our plan carries with it a commitment for the development of a VHA workforce that is second to none. The Occupational Health Program (OHP) carries out the many responsibilities to keep the workforce, which is the very heart of VA, healthy and safe. The development of a strong OHP is based on the recognition that VA patients can be better served by a healthy workforce.

This is the platform from which a diverse, vibrant group of committed staff can take advantage of the opportunities to serve their country by becoming the best at their jobs. We hope that this Plan captures not only our commitment to the goals and objectives of VA but our enthusiasm for our mission as we serve veterans.

I want to thank you for taking the time to look at our Plan and also thank the strategic planning committee for their hard work in putting our vision and strategies into words.



Susan H. Mather, M.D., M.P.H.
Chief Office of Public Health and Environmental
Hazards Officer

ORGANIZATION

The VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13) was established in 1990 as the Office of Environmental Health under the leadership of Susan H. Mather, M.D., M.P.H., and acquired its current name in 1994. The focus of the office has been to improve the health of veterans and staff through professionally developed policies relating to surveillance, prevention, management, outreach, and attention to the unique health care needs of populations, including women veterans, veterans with AIDS, veterans with Hepatitis C, and veterans exposed to environmental hazards. Three Strategic Health Care Groups are major components of our organization: the Occupational and Environmental Health Strategic Health Care Group, the Public Health Strategic Health Care Group, and the Emergency Management Strategic Health Care Group. In addition, the Women Veterans Health Program and the Environmental Epidemiology Service serve veterans under the auspices of Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards.

The Office is responsible for issues that require the application of sound principles of public health: health care geared toward populations and their unique characteristics in addition to individuals. These populations include Vietnam veterans, Gulf War veterans, Iraqi Freedom veterans, atomic veterans, veterans with cold injuries, and others who have experienced environmental exposures during military service, veterans with HIV/AIDS and/or Hepatitis C, veterans exposed to tobacco smoke and those who need to quit smoking, and women veterans. Although women veterans make up only 4% of the veteran population in 2003, the percentage is growing. Providing for their unique healthcare needs is a challenge in a system that is so predominately male. Policy related to the health of VHA employees is also a responsibility of the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards. In addition, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards helps coordinate VHA preparedness for responses to biological, radiological or chemical terrorism, as well as natural disasters events and carries out epidemiologic studies that provide a scientific foundation for the work of the Office, the VHA, and the VA.

Main Web site: <http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/>

VA Intranet - <http://vawww.vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/pubhealth/>

A. Occupational and Environmental Health Strategic Health Care Group (13A) -

<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/OEHSHG.htm>. The Occupational and Environmental Health Strategic Health Care Group has two key components, the Environmental Agents Service (EAS) and the Occupational Health Program. EAS also oversees the work of the War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers (WRIISC's).

1. Environmental Agents Service (131) - <http://www.va.gov/environagents/> VA Intranet - <http://vawww.appc1.va.gov/environagents/>

- Develops and reviews policies and procedures related to environmental issues, including Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, Gulf War, Project 112 (including Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense [SHAD]), and mustard gas.
- Conducts reviews and analyses of environmentally related legislation, and reviews and responds to legislative initiatives and questions.

- Organizes national conference calls on environmental issues involving environmental agents.
- Develops national continuing medical education programs (including a continuing medical education (CME) self-study program, interactive satellite teleconferences, and large-scale, onsite educational conferences) related to environmental hazards issues.
- Develops, reviews, and maintains Agent Orange, Ionizing Radiation, Gulf War, and Depleted Uranium (DU) registries.
- Initiates contracts to review scientific literature on environmental programs.
- Publishes "Agent Orange Review" and "Gulf War Review" newsletters, brochures and fact sheets.
- Supports congressionally chartered, White House, and other advisory committees identified with veterans' issues concerning possible long-term health consequences of exposure to health hazards during military service.
- Works with other Federal agencies, state, local and foreign governments on issues related to deployment medical surveillance, emergency preparedness, and environmental hazards.
- Works cooperatively with VHA Environmental Epidemiology Service to perform epidemiological surveys and to monitor scientific developments.
- Develops requests for proposals (RFPs), performs site selection, and monitors contract progress for exposure-related projects.
- Annually reviews current VHA directives and takes action to extend or revoke as appropriate.
- Responds to findings and recommendations from various government and nongovernmental oversight entities including advisory committees, the Institute of Medicine, Congressional committees, General Accounting Office, and modifies policies and procedures accordingly.
- Oversees the work of the War Related Illness and Injury Centers (WRIISC's).

**2. Occupational Health Program (OHP) (136) - <http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/OSH.htm>
*VA Intranet - <http://vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/pubhealth/OSH.htm>***

- Plans, develops, and recommends VHA's overall goals and strategic objectives for OHP.
- Provides advice, interpretation, and implementation of policies and programs related to OHP issues.
- Develops performance measures for the VISNs and VA medical centers.
- Conducts reviews and analyses of OHP-related legislation, and reviews and responds to legislative initiatives.
- Identifies, in collaboration with field personnel, the primary OHP educational needs.
- Organizes training and CME products and conferences in response to priorities identified by stakeholders in the field.
- Coordinates and collaborates OHP activities with other Federal departments and agencies, including NIOSH, CDC, NIH, EPA, OSHA, and DoD.
- Develops, maintains, and analyzes databases related to accident and injury tracking, medical surveillance, occupational safety, and occupational health.
- Interprets Federal guidelines and regulations related to OHP for VHA staff.
- Responds to findings and recommendations from various government and non-government oversight and advisory groups such as GAO, IG, OSHA and modifies policies and procedures accordingly.

- Provides consultation and advice to VA medical facilities on Occupational Health Programs.
- Provides upon request, remote and onsite support to field stations for complex problems in occupational health.

B. Public Health Strategic Health Care Group (13B) - <http://vhaaidsinfo.cio.med.va.gov/default.htm>
VA Intranet: <http://vaww.vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/aidservice/default.htm>

The Public Health Strategic Health Care Group has several components, including:

- The National HIV/Hepatitis C Program (which oversees the Hepatitis C Resource Center Program)
- The Public Health Prevention Program (including the Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation Program)
- The Center for Quality Management in Public Health (CQM)
- The Center for HIV Research Resources (CHRR)
- The AIDS Information Center

The Public Health Strategic Health Care Group:

- Serves as principal advisor to the Department on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); issues relating to Hepatitis C; and smoking and tobacco use cessation.
- Participates in developing and implementing clinical preparedness programs related to bioterrorism, emerging infectious diseases and other public health issues
- Represents VA in interdepartmental and interagency meetings; coordinates with other components of the office, VHA, and VA in these areas.
- Plans, develops, and recommends overall program goals and objectives consistent with VHA and VA strategic plans.
- Consults on clinical matters including treatment, diagnosis, and prevention in PSHG program areas with management and administrative staff in field facilities and VA Central Office.
- Interprets Federal guidelines and regulations related to program areas for clinical staff.
- Serves as faculty on VHA and VA educational programs, Department of Health and Human Services consultant and advisory meetings (National Institutes of Health, Health Resources and Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC), etc.) and, as appropriate, the National AIDS Commission.
- Coordinates and collaborates on identification of primary needs and foci for national educational efforts consistent with program goals.
- Plans, develops, and recommends strategic management objectives as part of the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) process, and submits budget proposals consistent with high quality care.
- Coordinates and conducts site visits. Maintains Technical Advisory Groups, including those related to HIV/AIDS; Hepatitis C; and smoking cessation.
- Develops and provides for updating the Immunology Case Registry and Hepatitis C Case Registry and assists the VA system in using this information to improve care.
- Develops clinical and patient information in program areas and disseminates it widely within VHA and VA and to interested stakeholders and individuals.

C. Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (13C) - <http://www.va.gov/emshg/>
VA Intranet - <http://vawww.appc1.va.gov/emshg>

- Provides Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM) services to the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Coordinates VHA's medical backup to the DoD.
- Assists the Nation upon request via the National Disaster Medical System and the National Response Plan for all major Presidentially declared disasters such as (hurricanes, earthquakes and floods, etc.) as well as terrorist attacks.
- Manages the VA Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) program.
- Supports the Medical Emergency Radiological Response Team (MERRT).
- Via a network of Area Emergency Managers, provides emergency management program consultation to VHA VISNs.
- The Seven for Success EMSHG goals are:
 - Improve effectiveness of VISN-VHA-VA comprehensive emergency management programs
 - Ensure VA readiness to provide medical support for DoD contingencies
 - Fulfill VA NDMS responsibilities
 - Lead VHA in the establishment of emergency management standards and become a benchmark organization for emergency management and health care
 - Contribute to the emergency management knowledge base and improve emergency management education and training
 - Deliver appropriate, timely, and effective disaster response and recovery services
 - Maximize EMSHG performance and organizational efficiency

D. Women Veterans Health Program (133) - <http://www.appc1.va.gov/wvhp/>
VA Intranet - <http://vawww.appc1.va.gov/wvhp/>

- Recommends policies to ensure integrated and unified clinical, educational, and research programs relating to women's health.
- Provides technical and professional information on women's health issues.
- Develops programs and VHA goals and guidelines.
- Serves as the principal advisor to VHA on women's health issues.
- Develops strategic management objectives as part of the VERA process, and ensures data and analysis is complete on budgetary issues.
- Prepares annual and special reports, responses to Congressional inquiries, and other formal communications.
- Develops national databases on women health program issues.
- Develops and reviews policies and procedures related to women's health issues.

E. Environmental Epidemiology Service (135)
<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/Epidemiology.htm>
VA Intranet - <http://vawww.vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/pubhealth/Epidemiology.htm>

- Provides support and advice to the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards on matters of epidemiology and scientific basis for health risk assessment.
- Conducts centrally directed epidemiologic studies and provides other VA Central Office support activities in a manner consistent with the highest scientific standards and in the most expedient and economically efficient way.
- Maintains, updates, and evaluates VA health registries created as a result of public law, e.g., Persian Gulf Health Registry, Agent Orange Registry, Ionizing Radiation Registry, the VA inpatient and outpatient data files on veterans exposed to environmental hazards, and the combined VA-DOD Gulf veterans database also mandated by law.
- Creates and maintains unique databases that lend themselves to research on veterans and promotes their use in collaboration with other interested researchers.
- Provides information concerning activities at appropriate forums for clinical and educational purposes, and to appropriate government officials, members of the public, and the Congress.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



PROGRAMS

- [Afghanistan Veterans Health](#)
- [Agent Orange](#)
- [AIDS/HIV](#)
- [Atomic Veterans / Ionizing Radiation Exposure](#)
- [Cold Injuries and Korean and WWII Veterans](#)
- [Comprehensive Emergency Management](#)
- [Depleted Uranium Follow-Up & Surveillance](#)
- [Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System](#)
- [Environmental Epidemiology](#)
- [Environmental Health](#)
- [Emergency Medical Preparedness](#)
- [Gulf War Veterans' Health](#)
 - [Examination Program for Spouses and Children](#)
- [Hepatitis C](#)
- [Mustard Gas Issues](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)
- [Operation Iraqi Freedom Health Issues/ Operation Enduring Freedom \(Afghanistan\)](#)
- [Post-Deployment Health Issues](#)
- [Project SHAD](#)
- [Public Health Watch](#)
- [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome \(SARS\)](#)
- [Smallpox](#)
- [Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation](#)
- [Terrorism \(Biological/Chemical/Radiological/Personal Preparedness\)](#)
- [Veterans Health Initiative](#)
- [War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers \(WRIISCs\)](#)
- [Women Veterans Health Program](#)

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

OUR MISSION is to improve the health of veterans by focusing on the unique health care needs of our customers while promoting safe work environments for VHA employees, conducting important epidemiologic studies, and preparing the workforce in the event of emergencies.

OUR VISION is to provide exemplary contributions to the health of veterans by pursuing increased efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and integrity in our programs.

OUR VALUES, the principles that we embrace, are:

- *COLLABORATION* - working together for the overall good of our organization, VHA, and the Department
- *COMMUNICATION* - actively listening as well as sharing accurate information with all who need it, when they need it, in a manner in which they can use it
- *CONTINUOUS LEARNING* - continuously learning from our own experience, each other, our customers, and our environment; embracing new technologies, maintaining state-of-the-art skills, and methodologies; and promoting personal and professional growth among our employees
- *CREATIVITY* - adapting our initiatives and approaches to emerging problems and changing environments
- *CUSTOMER SERVICE* – putting customers first, with uncompromising personal courtesy, attentiveness, responsiveness, and empathy.
- *FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY* - effectively managing the resources of our organization
- *HIGH QUALITY* - in all that we do, reflecting both high performance standards as well as responsiveness to the needs and expectations of those whom we serve.
- *HONESTY, INTEGRITY, TRUST, RESPECT, COMMITMENT, COMPASSION AND EXCELLENCE* – demonstrating these traits in all respects and at all times by everyone.
- *INTERDEPENDENCE* - fostering a true understanding that no part of the system functions alone because our success depends on unity.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

To achieve our strategic vision, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards reviewed the strategic plans of the Department of Veterans Affairs and of the Veterans Health Administration. We developed a planning framework that aligns with VA and VHA. The objectives for the Office are listed on the next page and the entire framework – as it fits within the VA and VHA plan – appears in a chart on the subsequent pages.

Objectives of the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards

- 13-Obj 1: Develop, enhance and provide education materials to veterans, health care providers and the public in order to improve quality and address special health care needs.
- 13-Obj 2: Work in collaboration with the field and with other government and public organizations to improve documentation, reporting, oversight, and summaries. This collaboration would enable our health care workers to provide improved patient care.
- 13-Obj 3: Employ multimedia resources to provide current information to employees, veterans and their families.
- 13-Obj 4: Encourage development of new VHI modules and other media education tools.
- 13- Obj 5: Strengthen the reporting and collection of data to ensure health care providers have current updated information and promote treatment recommendation and vaccination strategies.
- 13-Obj 6: Continually provide exceptional health care services while updating survey tools to monitor patient satisfaction.
- 13-Obj 7: Establish policies to expand access to health care services tailored to veterans' needs and to improve the health care practices by partnering with intra- and interagency organizations.
- 13-Obj 8: Formulate and implement policies to help veterans actively participate in their health care decisions and support programs that improve self-management skills of the patients.
- 13-Obj 9: Coordinate with other federal agencies to ensure VA's readiness to provide emergency medical support and improve public health.
- 13-Obj 10:
 - 1: Promote VA-sponsored studies that specifically address health issues specific to veterans, including post-deployment health problems.
 - 2: Determine long-term health consequences of military deployment.
- 13-Obj 11: Develop and distribute educational products that support ongoing clinical education and training on issues such as women's health and military health related matters.
- 13-Obj 12:
 - 1: Reinforce VA's policies on development of workforce that is knowledgeable through continuous learning and seek to inform employees on available tools to achieve this goal.
 - 2: Promote diversity in the workplace by development of a culture that supports acceptance of ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, disabilities, age, background and other differences.
 - 3: Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees.
- 13-Obj 13: Promote effective two-way communication about OPHEH programs and policies among program staff and our constituencies in and out of VA.
- 13-Obj 14: Collaborate with government and nongovernmental agencies on policies that improve the quality of VA health care.
- 13-Obj 15: Whenever possible, consider the efforts of VBA and NCA, as well as other components of VHA, in developing and implementing programs.
- 13-Obj 16/17: Continuously seek ways to improve productivity and effectiveness.
- 13- Obj 18: Develop recommendations and data management systems that improve health

VA/VHA/OPHEH Strategic Planning Framework

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
1. Restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.	1. Maximize the physical, mental, and social functioning of veterans with disabilities and be recognized as a leader in the provision of specialized health care services. (VA Objective 1.1)	1. Maximize the independent functioning of veterans in the least restrictive setting.	(1) Improve and enhance home care services and develop an assisted living strategy. (2) Promote the use of care management to facilitate care in the least restrictive and most efficient setting.	13-Obj 1: Develop, enhance and provide education materials to veterans, health care providers and the public in order to improve quality and address special healthcare needs.	13-Strat 1 - Develop and employ a range of tools related to environmental hazard exposure, women's health issues, post-deployment health, bioterrorism, and emerging public health concerns, and directed towards improving the quality of life for veterans with diverse health care needs and their families.
		2. Provide coordinated, comprehensive, and integrated care to promote health and improve patient functioning.	(3) Reduce variability of health outcomes by providing for more consistent delivery of services.	13-Obj 2: Work in collaboration with the field and other government and public organizations to improve documentation, reporting, oversight and summaries. This collaboration would enable our health care workers to provide improved patient care.	13-Strat 2a – Create databases and utilize data to document health events, evaluate health care outcomes, and enable care that improves the quality of life for veterans concerned with environmental exposures, women's health, post-deployment health, and public health concerns.
					13-Strat 2b – Partner with other agencies to develop materials

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
					to enable optimal functioning, particularly as veterans make the transition from military to civilian life.
2. Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.	2. Ease the reentry of new veterans into civilian life by increasing awareness of, access to, and use of VA health care, benefits and services. (VA Objective 2.1)	3. Optimize the use of health care information and technology for the benefit of the veteran.	(4) Accelerate development of Health Data Repository (HDR), HealtheVet, and telehealth initiatives.	13-Obj 3: Employ multimedia resources to provide current information to employees, veterans and their families	13-Strat 3 – Produce and disseminate information in a variety of formats tailored to the needs of specific veteran audiences concerned with environmental hazard exposure, women’s health issues, post-military deployment health, bioterrorism, emergency preparedness, and emerging public health concerns.
3. Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation.	3. Provide high quality, reliable, accessible, timely and efficient health care that maximizes the health and functional status for all enrolled veterans, with special focus on veterans with service-connected conditions, those unable to defray the cost, and those statutorily eligible for care. (VA Objective 3.1)	4. Increase provider and veterans’ knowledge of the impact of military service on health.	(5) Increase collaboration between VBA, VHA and DoD during the military discharge process. (6) Collaborate with DoD to develop a complete lifelong health record for veterans. (7) Collaborate with VBA to invigorate and update the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP). (8) Intensify efforts to implement Veterans' Health Initiative (VHI), including fully incorporating each veteran's military history and potential consequences of service into CPRS.	13-Obj 4: Encourage development of new VHI modules and other media educational tools.	13-Strat 4 – Create and promote comprehensive materials that increase knowledge and awareness of veterans’ health issues among medical professionals, other employees, and veterans.
		5. Continuously improve the quality and safety of health care for veterans to be the benchmark for	(9) Be a leader in the advancement of knowledge and practice of quality and patient initiatives to include: (a) the use of preventive	13-Obj 5: Strengthen the reporting and collection of data to ensure health care providers	13-Strat 5 – Lead multifaceted approaches to providing data that will improve health care and

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
		health care outcomes.	medicine practices and guidelines for chronic disease management; (b) increasing the use of automated systems to reduce the likelihood of errors; and (c) developing a culture of error reporting, analysis and learning.	have current updated information and promote treatment recommendation and vaccination strategies	health outcomes related to environmental hazard exposure, women's health issues, post-deployment health, and emerging and existing public health concerns.
		6. Improve patients' satisfaction with their VA health care.	(10) Implement a "service-recovery" program. (11) Standardize patient satisfaction surveys with real time results.	13-Obj 6: Continually provide exceptional health care services while updating survey tools to monitor patient satisfaction.	13-Strat 6 – Build effective means of improving employee and patient satisfaction in programs and products of the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards.
		7. Improve access, convenience, and timeliness of VA health care services.	(12) Provide incentives for ongoing, continuous healthcare system redesigns to streamline work, and to analyze, identify, and promulgate improved health care practices. (13) Collaborate with public and private organizations to reduce redundancies and fill gaps in services to veterans.	13-Obj 7: Establish policies to expand access to health care services tailored to veterans' needs and to improve the health care practices by partnering with intra- and interagency organizations.	13-Strat 7 - Work within and outside VA to improve and expand access to care for veterans with environmental hazard exposure, women's health issues, post-deployment health, and emerging public health concerns.
		8. Create a health care environment characterized by patient-centered services where individual health care decisions are made on the basis of current medical knowledge, consistent with patients' informed preferences and needs.	(14) Implement initiatives to support shared decision-making and patient empowerment.	13-Obj 8: Formulate and implement policies to help veterans actively participate in their health care decisions and support programs that improve self-management skills of the patients.	13-Strat 8 – Enhance patient-centered programs and care related to environmental exposures, women's health issues, post-deployment health, and emerging public health concerns,

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
4. Contribute to the public health, emergency management, socio-economic well-being, and history of the Nation.	4. Improve the Nation's preparedness for response to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters by developing plans and taking actions to ensure continued service to veterans as well as support to national, state, and local emergency management and homeland security efforts. (VA Objective 4.1)	9. Prepare to respond to disasters and national emergencies.	(15) Partner with other Federal, state and community agencies to develop a national emergency preparedness plan that clearly articulates VA's role and capabilities to respond to emergencies. (16) Conduct training and emergency preparedness drills using standardized scenarios consistent with VA's Emergency Management Program Guidebook.	13-Obj 9: Coordinate with other federal agencies to ensure VA's readiness to provide emergency medical support and improve public health.	13-Strat 9 - Lead plans and programs to increase VA's capacity for public health emergency management, collaborating and coordinating in and out of VA on training materials and programs that enable VA to be ready for national and local emergencies.
	5. Advance VA medical research and development programs that address veterans' 7, with an emphasis on service-connected injuries and illnesses, and contribute to the Nation's knowledge of disease and disability. (VA Objective 4.2)	10. Conduct medical research that leads to demonstrable improvements in veterans' health.	(17) Maintain full research compliance and standardized protection of human subjects. (18) Increase the proportion of research funding directed to projects addressing veteran-related issues, cooperative studies and translational research.	13-Obj 10.1: Promote VA-sponsored studies that specifically address health issues specific to veterans, including post deployment health issues.	13-Strat 10.1 - Design, fund, foster, and support research on veterans health concerns, including studies related to environmental hazards, women's health, post-deployment health, and emerging public health issues.
				13-Obj 10.2: Determine long-term health consequences of military deployment.	13-Strat 10.2 - Support War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers that support research on military deployment-related health concerns.

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
	6. Sustain partnerships with the academic community that enhance the quality of care to veterans and provide high quality educational experiences for health care trainees. (VA Objective 4.3)	11. Promote excellence and innovation in the education of future health care professionals.	(19) Improve the training and awareness in military health related issues. (20) Provide appropriate support for training, education, and resident supervision.	13-Obj 11: Develop and distribute educational products that support ongoing clinical education and training on issues such as women health and military health.	13-Strat 11 - Originate and promote health professional and occupational health training and education that improves health care for veterans on such topics as environmental hazard exposure, women's health issues, post-deployment health, bioterrorism, and emerging public health concerns.
VA Enabling Goal.	VHA Enabling Goals	VHA Enabling Objectives	VHA Enabling Strategies	13 Enabling Objectives	13 Enabling Strategies
Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families by applying sound business principles that result in effective management of people, communications, technology, and governance.	7. Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families. (VA Enabling Goal E-1)	12. Recruit, support, and retain a knowledgeable, diverse, engaged, and continuously learning workforce.	(21) Develop a comprehensive and coherent workforce development plan that incorporates HPDM, succession planning, diversity training, and ADR orientation. (22) Implement pay policies and HR practices to facilitate hiring and retaining sufficient health care workers to meet capacity demands across the full continuum of care.	13-Obj 12.1: Reinforce VA's policies on development of workforce that is knowledgeable through continuous learning and seek to inform employees on available tools to achieve this goal. 13 Obj 12.2 - Promote diversity in the workplace by development of a culture that supports acceptance of ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, disabilities, age, background and	13-Strat 12.1 - Recruit, develop, retain, and engage a multifaceted staff that enables a high level of work quality and productivity. 13 Strat 12.2 – Employ people who represent diverse cultures and develop an atmosphere that fosters appreciation of such multiplicity.

VA STRATEGIC GOALS	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
				<p>other differences.</p> <p>13 Obj 12.3 – Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees.</p>	<p>To this end, a Diversity Committee is being formed within our office to raise awareness and understanding of the diversity in the workforce.</p> <p>13 Strat 12.3 – Develop programs, products and services to improve working conditions, employee and patient satisfaction and system performance based on recognized hazards and problems, regulatory standards and professional guidelines.</p>
	<p>8. Improve the overall governance and performance of VA by applying sound business principles, ensuring accountability, and enhancing our management of resources through improved capital asset management; acquisition and competitive sourcing; and linking</p>	<p>13. Effectively communicate the contributions of VA health care, research, and education.</p>	<p>(23) Implement the VHA communication plan.</p>	<p>13-Obj 13: Promote effective two-way communication about Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards programs and policies among program staff and our constituencies in and out of VA.</p>	<p>13-Strat 13 - Promote products, programs, and policies that address the concerns of pertinent audiences.</p>

VA STRATEGIC GOALS	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
	strategic planning, budgeting, and performance planning. (VA Enabling Goal E-4)				
		14. Expand Federal, state, local, and private partnerships to foster improvements in the coordination and delivery of health care and other services.	(24) Expand VA sharing and collaboration with DoD, Indian Health Service, and state veterans' organizations.	13-Obj 14: Collaborate with government and nongovernmental agencies on policies that improve the quality of VA health care.	13-Strat 14 – Optimize partnerships to foster improved, coordinated delivery of health care, particularly in such areas as occupational, environmental, women’s health, post-military deployment, and public health.
		15. Promote cooperation and collaboration throughout VA to provide seamless service to veterans.	(25) Expand the Compensation and Pension Record Interchange (CAPRI).	13-Obj 15: Whenever possible, consider the efforts of VBA and NCA, as well as other components of VHA, in developing and implementing programs.	13-Strat 15 - Continue to coordinate with other components of VA on veterans’ health issues.
		16. Optimize the availability and efficient use of resources and services.	(26) Deploy VHA initiative to increase competitive sourcing. (27) Fully implement PRTF recommendations.	13-Obj 16/17: Continuously seek ways to improve productivity and effectiveness.	13-Strat 16/17 - Explore and utilize cost effective methods of creating and delivering Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards products.

<i>VA STRATEGIC GOALS</i>	VHA GOALS	VHA OBJECTIVES	VHA STRATEGIES	13 OBJECTIVES	13 STRATEGIES
		17. Increase revenue and efficiency through private sector partnerships, technology, and improved business practices.	(28) Assess the feasibility of Federal imaging, lab, and prescription centers. (29) Take full advantage of research-related intellectual property opportunities.	[17 incorporated above]	
		18. Develop innovative approaches to the design and evaluation of health care delivery systems.	(30) Re-engineer health care processes to incorporate technologic advances and to address shortages of health care professionals.	13- Obj 18: Develop recommendations and data management systems that improve health care delivery.	13-Strat 18 – Utilize database technology to improve disease management, including long-term effects of environmental exposures, women’s health, post-military deployment health, and public health concerns.

AUDIENCES WE SERVE

The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, through its policy and program development, serves a wide array of audiences. These include:

- Women veterans, now 4% of veterans enrolled in the VA medical system as of 2003
- World War II veterans, including those with cold injuries and exposure to mustard gas
- Atomic veterans, who were exposed to nuclear bombs during war or testing
- Vietnam veterans who served may have been exposed to Agent Orange and other chemicals
- Gulf War veterans, particularly those suffering from long-lasting but hard to diagnose illnesses
- Veterans exposed to Depleted Uranium from friendly-fire accidents or other situations
- Iraqi and Enduring Freedom veterans
- Veterans with HIV/AIDS, the largest group of such patients in any U.S. medical system (19,000 as of 2002)
- Veterans with Hepatitis C, with more than any other U.S. medical system (180,000 as of 2002)
- Veterans who smoke (nearly 33% of those seeking VA care)
- Veterans and employees at risk of emerging health concerns, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
- Health professionals who take care of VHA patients
- Leadership of VA, VHA, VISNs and facilities
- VHA emergency managers
- Employees of the Veterans Health Administration (about 200,000) in terms of their own employment health and safety issues
- American public

The Office serves these audiences through

- Policy development
- Protocol development and dissemination
- Management of databases related to exposures and monitoring veterans' health
- Development of educational programs for employees
- Dissemination of information to veterans and clinicians
- The review and analysis of proposed and pending legislation

- Liaison with the Compensation and Pension Service in the Veterans Benefits Administration
- Technical assistance to the field, which includes both medical centers and VISNs
- Participation in Congressional hearings, interagency committees, Congressional, Veterans Service Organizations, professional and patient associations, foreign military and other stakeholder groups

The Public Health and Environmental Hazards Office supports VISNs and individual VA health care facilities by providing guidelines, protocols, registries, educational programs, and consultative assistance to promote high quality, compassionate treatment for veterans within its purview. The Office supports epidemiological analysis and other research efforts to try to elucidate the impact of exposures to various types of environmental agents and cooperates with efforts undertaken by other federal agencies and independent organizations such as the Institute of Medicine.

The Office supports the VHA Under Secretary for Health, the Secretary, and other senior officials by assisting with Congressional testimony, providing reports mandated by Congress, and participating on Presidential and interagency committees, and working groups.

OUR STAFF: STRENGTH THROUGH DIVERSITY

The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards is not only committed to providing quality service to our veterans and customers, but to developing a culture that supports, embraces, and is strengthened by diversity. Our Office has brought people together who represent diverse cultures, religions, ethnicity, family structures, disabilities, ages, and professions. Working with people who are in some way different than ourselves has created opportunities for genuine understanding and a rich exchange of ideas that has enhanced our office and enabled it to take on a wide variety of challenges.

We are currently developing a Diversity Committee that raises awareness and fosters an understanding of the backgrounds and characteristics of the staff of the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards.

Advertising and encouraging participation in the VA's educational programs on different cultures has broadened our knowledge and perspective. Our Office believes diversity awareness is a business imperative that is important to our organization and to the community we serve. Diversity encompasses all the ways in which human beings are different yet similar.

EVALUATION

Program evaluation is essential to demonstrate a program's worth. Program evaluations should illustrate whether programs are appropriate, adequate, effective and efficient. At the same time evaluation can show if programs have unexpected benefits or create unexpected problems. Well-designed evaluations are needed to appraise results and document progress.

Our evaluations are conducted at several levels:

- Formative evaluations make sure program plans, procedures, activities, materials and modifications are working as planned. These evaluations begin when the program is conceived.
- Process evaluations are conducted to learn whether a program is serving a target population as planned and whether the number of veterans addressed is more or less than expected.
- Impact evaluations are conducted to measure whatever change the program creates in the target population.
- Outcome evaluations are conducted to learn how well the program succeeded in achieving its ultimate goal. Measuring these changes may take a number of years after the program has been in place.

Due to the variation in our programs our evaluation methods may require both qualitative and quantitative methods. The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards continually assesses the effects of implementation of programs and initiatives using a variety of evaluation tools.. These include surveys of veterans regarding their satisfaction with the availability and utilization of health care delivery. For example, women veterans rate the safety, comfort and privacy of their VHA health care experience as satisfactory or exceptional. The Community Advisory Boards (CABs) are yet another example of gauging how well the management of patients in specific disease areas. The recommendations developed through such interactions with the CABs are implemented to improve the care of veterans as well to develop strategies and set appropriate direction of the programs. Particular tools such as clinical guidelines and clinical reminders are developed to improve local clinicians' ability to better manage patient populations.

The use of databases to monitor and measure certain health outcomes is routinely employed. For example, regular health data summaries from registries are utilized to identify and respond to inconsistencies in the provision of care for veterans with certain diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis C and smoking cessation. The monitoring of the backlog of registry examinations helps the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards direct the facilities. These methodologies aid in the evaluation of outcome measuring that meet or exceed established standards. The data summaries are also utilized to recognize and respond to variance in workload leading to efficient resource utilization.

In partnership with the Office of Quality and Performance, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards routinely examines and evaluates certain programs such as Hepatitis C within the context of the performance measures that support VHA's strategic plan. This evaluation drawn from the External Peer Review Program (EPRP) helps to identify whether critical clinical and operational practices are meeting the performance targets to achieve high quality health

outcomes for the veterans. Such evidence-based practice of measuring health indicators are critical to the care of veterans and are directly linked to the overall VHA's strategic plan.

PUBLICATIONS

VHA Policy & Information

[Manuals](#)
[Handbooks](#)
[Directives](#)
[Information Letters](#)

Newsletters

[Agent Orange Review](#)
[Gulf War Review](#)
[VA HIV/Hepatitis C News Service](#)
[Women Veterans Health Program](#)

Pocket Cards

[Biological Terrorism \(word doc.\)](#)
[Chemical Terrorism \(word doc.\)](#)
[Terrorism with Ionizing Radiation \(word doc.\)](#)
[Hepatitis C - management](#)
[Vaccination Against Hepatitis A and B](#)
[Sexual Harassment](#)
[Project 112& Project SHAD \(Deseret Test Center\)](#)

Fact Sheets

[Agent Orange Briefs](#)
[Illnesses of Gulf War Veterans](#)
[Agent Orange and Related Issues](#)
[A Report to Veterans: Department of Veterans Affairs Gulf War Research \(English and Spanish\)](#)
[Nasopharyngeal Radium Therapy](#)
[Mustard Gas Exposure and Long-Term Health Effects](#)
[VA Programs for Veterans Exposed to Radiation](#)
[EMSHG Emergency Management Academy \(EMA\)](#)
[HIV and AIDS Treatment and Research](#)

Brochures

[A Summary of VA Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Personnel](#)
[Health Care and Assistance for U.S. Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom](#)
[You Can Prepare for Disasters](#)
[Decontamination in Washington, DC for Chemical, Biological and Nuclear Agents](#)
[Afghanistan Veterans: Information for Veterans Who Served in Afghanistan](#)
[Military Service in the Afghanistan War: Questions & Answers about Health Concerns of Veterans and Their Families](#)
[Employee Awareness of the Potential Hazards of Weapons of Mass Destruction](#)
[War Related Illnesses and Injury Center - Washington, DC](#)
[Personal Emergency Preparedness](#)
[Gulf War Veterans Illnesses: Questions and Answers \(English\)](#)
[Gulf War Veterans Illnesses: Questions and Answers \(Spanish\)](#)
[Agent Orange Brochure \(English and Spanish\)](#)
[Prevention for HIV+ Patients](#)
[Hepatitis C series \(29 individual titles\)](#)
[Women Veterans Health Program](#)
[Counseling and Treatment for Sexual Trauma](#)
[EMSHG Brochure](#)

***Independent Study Courses**

[Cold Injury](#)

[Veterans and Radiation](#)

[Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure](#)

[A Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health](#)

[Prisoners of War](#)

[Agent Orange](#)

[Hearing Impairment](#)

[Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)

[Spinal Cord Injury](#)

[Visual Impairment](#)

[Traumatic Amputation and Prosthetics](#)

[Caring for War Wounded](#)

Future education modules will be on the [Veterans Health Initiative site](#)

Reports

[Summary Report: VA Hepatitis C Research Symposium, October 1-2, 2001](#)

[EMSHG FY 2002 Annual Report](#)

[EMSHG FY 2001 Annual Report](#)

[EMSHG FY 2000 Annual Report](#)

[Federally Sponsored Research on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses for 2001](#)

[1999 Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Annual Report](#)

[EMSHG Brief](#)

Guidebooks and Other Formats

[Emergency Management Program Guidebook](#)

[EMSHG EMA Knowledge Management Library](#)

[HIV Prevention Handbook: A Guide for Clinicians](#)

[VA Treatment Recommendations \(Version 5\): Patients with Chronic Hepatitis C](#)

[Initiating and Maintaining a Hepatitis C Support Group: A How-To Program Guide](#)

[Woman's Primary Care Guide \(Print Only\)](#)

WEB SITES AND MORE INFORMATION

Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards

<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/>
(VA Intranet <http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/pubhealth/>)

Above is the main Web (Internet) site for the office. It provides a brief history of the Office, identifies its three strategic health care groups and other programs, lists the areas of responsibility, and describes overall efforts. It organized so that users can find information by organization, topic, or format. Other Web sites are as follows:

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/environagents/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/environagents/>)-- This site directs readers to VA Web sites on the Gulf War, Agent Orange, and Ionizing Radiation programs, material for Afghanistan veterans, and information about the VA War-Related Illnesses and Injury Study Centers (WRIISCs).

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/gulfwar/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/gulfwar/>) -- This site deals with the health problems and concerns of Gulf War veterans and their families. It includes the VA Gulf War Veterans Information helpline number 1-800-PGW-VETS, lists VA Gulf War-related articles, reviews and publications, including a Gulf War Research Report to Veterans, a Questions-and-Answers brochure, journal article summaries, VA's Gulf War manual, a Gulf War fact sheet, also the Gulf War Risk Factor Report Reprints. There are links to the Gulf War Review newsletters, demonstration projects, an online independent study course for health professionals, and other information and material.

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/agentorange/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/agentorange/>)-- This site provides readers with information about herbicides used in Vietnam. It starts with an Agent Orange overview, an Agent Orange General Information brochure, and a fact sheet on benefits for veterans exposed to Agent Orange. There are links to the Agent Orange Review newsletters, Agent Orange Brief fact sheet series, news releases, VA disability compensation (including information about online filing), an online independent study course for health professionals, and more.

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/irad/>. (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/irad/>) -- The site includes the VA Ionizing Radiation handbook and a radiation fact sheet.

<http://www.va.gov/shad/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/shad/>) -- This site provides information about Project 112 (including Project SHAD). Project SHAD was a series of tests conducted by the DoD during the 1960s to determine the effectiveness of shipboard detection of chemical and biological warfare agents, the protective measures against these agents, and the potential risk to U.S. forces posed by the agents. Project 112 involved similar tests conducted on land. The site includes information letters, a Questions-and-Answers document, several DoD fact sheets, plus information about filing a claim, including doing so online.

<http://www.va.gov/vhi/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/VHI/>) -- The Veterans Health Initiative (VHI) is a comprehensive program to recognize the connection between certain health effects and military service, to allow military medical history to be better documented, to prepare health care providers to better serve their veteran patients. The VHI includes several independent study guides that can be downloaded or use online at this site. Topics include cold injury, Agent Orange, Gulf War, Radiation, and other subjects.

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/wvhp/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/wvhp/>) -- The Women Veterans Health Program promotes the health, welfare, and dignity of women veterans and their families, by ensuring equitable access to timely sensitive, quality health care. This site provides information about VA programs for women veterans, comprehensive health centers, military sexual trauma, the clinical programs of excellence, and other health issues of interest to women veterans.

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/> (VA Intranet <http://vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/phshcg/>) -- The Public Health Strategic Health Care Group includes the Center for HIV Research Resources, Center for Quality Management in Public Health, Hepatitis C Resource Centers, HIV/Hepatitis C Program Office, and the Public Health National Prevention Program Office. This site includes VA directives and information letters, HIV/AIDS information, HIV and Hepatitis C treatment and prevention, smoking and tobacco use cessation program information, conferences/continuing education information, and much more.

<http://www.va.gov/hepatitisc/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.va.gov/hepatitisc/>) The Web site of the VA's National Hepatitis C Program provides comprehensive information for both patients and health professionals on this common viral infection of the liver.

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/SARS/> (VA Intranet <http://vhacoweb1.cio.med.va.gov/phshcg/sars/>) -- SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) is a serious illness characterized by fever and other flu-like symptoms that can progress rapidly to pneumonia and other problems. VA is greatly concerned about reports of the spread of SARS, from Asia to other parts of the world. The VA SARS Web site is designed to help VA staff and patients, and others concerned with veterans' health, to be better prepared for the disease and rapidly find links to accurate, up-to-date information.

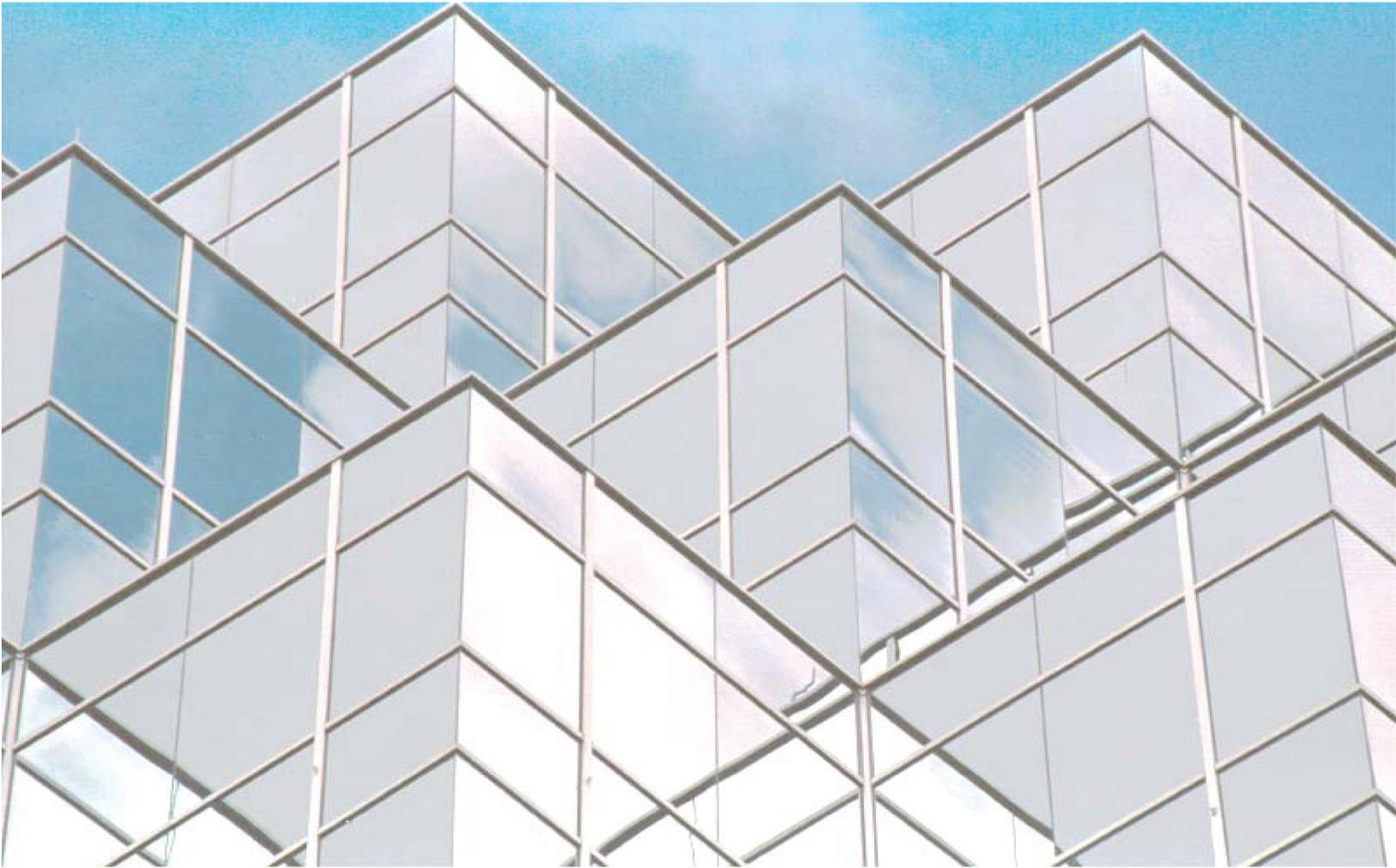
<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/OSH/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/pubhealth/OSH.htm>) -- This site summarizes the Veterans Health Administration's occupational health program plans, activities, and accomplishments in VA Central Office, focusing primarily on workers' compensation and clinical occupational health activities. [Note: Intranet only]

<http://www.appc1.va.gov/smallpox/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/smallpox/>) -- Smallpox represents a major bioterrorism threat. This Web site provides current reports, policy summaries, and clinical information on smallpox planning and response for the Veterans Health Administration.

<http://www.va.gov/emshg/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.appc1.va.gov/emshg/>) -- This site is Veterans Health Administration's single best source for Comprehensive Emergency Management information. Hosted by the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG), the site posts current publications, conferences and hot topics about disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery issues. It includes links to important emergency management and homeland

security sites, the EMSHG Annual Report and a Directory with contact information on EMSHG staff throughout the system.

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/watch/> (VA Intranet <http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/watch/>) --
The Public Health Watch site provides references to emerging health concerns, particularly infectious diseases. It also covers new developments in the established public health issues.



Department of Veterans Affairs
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Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13)
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<http://vaww.vhacoweb1.cio.medva.gov/pubhealth/>
<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/>