

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



AWARDS & HONORS

TWO HAMMER AWARDS PRESENTED

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance (OTAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Compliance program for Compliance Assistance Centers Program each received Vice President Gore's Hammer Award last week.

OTAA, which helps workers in companies impacted by trade laws, adapted the "GE workout model" for process improvement as a vehicle for reinvention.

Self-managed work groups streamlined several significant work processes, allowing for more staff involvement and control. Staff members assigned workloads, developed performance standards, resolved case problems, and eliminated or revamped their work processes. The applicant processing procedure was consolidated and duplication of services was eliminated.

Customers can now access training quickly, and there is increased flexibility for participation in extended training programs. Investigation procedures were streamlined and a backlog of overdue cases was reduced from over 100 to 0. Staff reduced the average time to process a case from 85 to 48 days. The program also improved the State funding process so that training funds can now get from the Federal level to the States within 3 days instead of 3-4 weeks.

The Hammer Award was given to EPA's Office of Compliance for developing four national compliance assistance centers.

The four national assistance centers are for agriculture, automotive services, metal finishing and printing.

The Hammer Award is a special recognition to teams which have made significant contributions in support of the President's national Performance Review principles of

putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees, and getting back to basics. More than 500 Hammer Awards have been presented nationally to teams comprised of federal, state, and local employees, and citizens who are working to build a better government.

—EPA & U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR
10/31/96

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

■(WASHINGTON) President Clinton on Tuesday proclaimed November 1996 as National American Indian Heritage Month, saying, "Throughout our history, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been an integral part of the American character. Against the odds, America's first peoples have endured, and they remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence."

"Let us rededicate ourselves to the principle that all Americans have the tools to make the most of their God-given potential. We must teach our children about our past — both the good and the bad — so that they may learn from our successes and mistakes," said President Clinton, adding "We must provide our children with the knowledge and skills to permit them to surpass our own achievements and create a stronger, more united American community. We must provide them greater opportunity. It was the Iroquois who taught that in every deliberation we should consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

—THE WHITE HOUSE
10/31/96

BUSINESS & LABOR

NATIONAL EFFORT LAUNCHED TO STREAMLINE EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM FOR DISABLED

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Education recently announced an agreement with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation to streamline the system for placing people with disabilities into competitive employment.

The focus of the pact is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, a 76-year-old federal state partnership that has helped millions of people with disabilities get jobs.

Under the agreement between the department's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the council, both

sides will work toward reducing overly burdensome rules, regulations and reports in order to focus on the program's primary purpose — putting more people with disabilities in quality employment.

"I am excited about this plan and optimistic about what it means for people with disabilities," said RSA Commissioner Frederick K. Schroeder. "It has probably never been more important for a person with a disability to be competitive in the job market. Despite success in the voc rehab program, unemployment for persons with disabilities remains at an alarming rate of more than 60 percent."

Vocational rehabilitation programs offer services aimed at lessening the impact of a mental or physical disability in finding a meaningful job. Counseling, training, technology assistance and job placement are among those services. Each participant has an individual service plan to recognize and address the diversity of disabilities and personal needs.

The council and RSA plan to work toward a more responsive and interactive program, eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy, emphasizing consumer involvement and re-focusing on employment in good jobs.

—U.S. DEPT. OF EDUCATION
10/28/96

OSHA CUTS PERMISSIBLE EXPOSURE LIMIT FOR CANCER-CAUSING BUTADIENE

■(WASHINGTON) Almost 10,000 workers will be better protected from cancer under a new standard for exposure to the chemical 1-3 butadiene announced last week by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The agency reduced the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for 1,3-butadiene (BD) from 1,000 parts per million parts of air (ppm) to 1 ppm to reduce workers' risk of developing cancer and other potential adverse health effects. About 9,700 workers at 255 facilities nationwide are potentially exposed to BD.

Butadiene is a colorless, odorless, flammable and highly reactive gas. In 1991, the U.S. produced 3.0 billion pounds of BD. About 60 percent is used in rubber manufacture. In addition to presenting an increased risk of such cancers as leukemia, BD has been shown to increase risk to the re-

Continued on next page

"I have always said that a conference was held for one reason only, to give everybody a chance to get sore at everybody else. Sometimes it takes two or three conferences to scare up a war, but generally one will do it."

Will Rogers
syndicated column
The New York Times
July 6, 1933