

# WORD FROM WASHINGTON



## Congress Considers Safety Measures

(NAPSA)—Congress recently passed an Act that may actually save taxpayers money while protecting the life and health of civilians working for the military.

The new bill is called the Defense Employee Work Safety Demonstration Program. It's designed to find better ways to prevent accidents among people who work on military bases and other Department of Defense sites.

The bill was passed not a moment too soon, safety experts say. Workplace accidents and injuries cost the U.S. Army \$500 million a year, including \$169 million in 2001 in payments under the Federal Employees Compensation Act. Every day, 33 civilians are injured on the job and every year, workplace injuries affect between 12,000 and 14,000 employees, or an average of five percent of the workforce, according to OSHA figures.

A key component of the new program is introducing best practices from the private sector to the Department of Defense.

Field observations are a crucial part of safety training, reports veteran consultant trainers Virgil Torbert and David Gilbert. They describe their training style as "discovery



**Promising to introduce a "culture change" in how the U.S. Army approaches workplace safety, an innovative new safety program is now underway.**

learning," a participant focused approach allowing for maximum group interaction and mutual learning.

Having learned how to recognize unsafe work practices and situations, and techniques for talking to fellow employees about how to fix them, the participants visit several sites to try out their skills. Says Torbert, "It's really a people issue. People are reluctant to go out and do field observations because they don't want to be criticizing their colleagues. We give them techniques for doing it that are non-confrontational."

"Safety is very simple," adds Gilbert. "It's about looking at what you're doing and making sure it's going to prevent injuries."