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SUBJECT: Governor Douglas Announces Workforce Safety Awards

Sixteen Vermont employers recognized for keeping workers safe on the job

South Burlington, Vt. – Sixteen Vermont firms were given recognition today by Governor Jim Douglas for keeping employees safe in their workplaces. Three firms captured the top awards, while nine were presented with certificates of recognition. Four other firms were among the finalists for the prestigious Governor's Award for Outstanding Workplace Safety.

Cabot Creamery Cooperative of Cabot received the award in the General Industry Category. Northwestern Medical Center of St. Albans was the recipient in the Health Care Industry Category, and Sto Corporation of Rutland received the award in the Small Business Category.

"A strong commitment to safety in the workplace not only benefits workers, it is also good for business. Excellence in workplace safety creates higher quality products, greater employee efficiency and higher profitability. Companies that cultivate a culture of safety are better prepared to control and reduce costs related to worker's compensation, lost productivity and damaged equipment," said Governor Douglas. "That is why I want to encourage all businesses throughout Vermont to commit to creating safer environments in the workplace."

Several criteria served as benchmarks for the decision making process, including the business's experience modification (MOD) rate, whether there had been workplace fatalities or catastrophic injuries, an active safety committee including both management and employees, and a written workplace safety policy.

Cabot Creamery began its aggressive approach to workplace safety five years ago and has dropped its MOD rate from .89 to .66, significantly reduced OSHA Recordable Accidents and recordable rates, reduced lost time accidents and frequency, and reduced their accident severity rate. Their workplace safety program has also saved Cabot nearly \$1 million in Workers' Compensation Claim dollars over the five year period.

"Our employee-led Cabot Awareness Task Force has advocated well that employee safety in our creamery and creating award-winning dairy products are but two sides of the same coin," said James Pratt, Senior Vice President of Operations for Cabot. "We are deeply grateful – both our employees and our farm family owners – for this honor."

Northwest Medical Center has a very strong workplace safety program. With a MOD rate of .76, NMC has only two open workers compensation claims and zero lost workday claims in the past four years, which is considered unprecedented for a hospital environment field by experts in the workers compensation field. Health care is considered one of the nation's higher exposure industries.

Sto Corporation has received several awards for its outstanding workplace safety program. Two years ago they were awarded the SHARP Certification from Project WorkSAFE. Last year, Sto was awarded their ISO-14001 Environmental Management System certification. Believing that training, awareness and responsibility are the keys to a successful safety program, all employees, from management on down take pride in their work and in being safe on the job. One key piece of their strong safety foundation is the knowledge that any condition that is, or seems to be unsafe, will be corrected without delay.

Receiving Finalists honors were Hancor, Inc., of North Springfield, **Hubbardton Forge**, of Castleton, Champlain Cable Corp., of Colchester, and IBM of Essex Junction.

Receiving Certificates of Recognition for their continuing advocacy of workplace safety programs and policies were VELCO, Rutland; Mack Molding, Arlington; D.E.W. Construction, Williston; Curtis Lumber, Williston; Burke Mountain, Burke; The Howard Center, Burlington; Omya, Inc., Florence; Rio Tinto, Ludlow; and NKS Steering Systems America, Bennington.

The Governor's Award for Outstanding Workplace Safety program is in its fourth year and has recognized more than 30 Vermont businesses for their efforts to keep their employees safe in their workplace whether it be in the plant, in the office, or out on the road.