1. **Introduction**
   1. **Commonwealth Safety Program Overview and Purpose:**

In 1983, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania qualified as a self-insured entity for workers’ compensation coverage. This self-insured status offers the commonwealth the ability to contain the direct and indirect costs associated with workplace accidents and illnesses, instead of paying an annual premium established by an insurance company. A workers’ compensation insurance policy for a company equivalent to the size and structure of the commonwealth could translate into an annual premium that is nearly double the costs of the current program.

The self-insured status is awarded after an extensive review by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. The review process includes an annual financial and organizational assessment to assure that the commonwealth can meet and maintain the standards required under the self-insurance program. The standards for compliance are defined in the Pennsylvania Workers’ Compensation Act.

There are two areas of the PA Workers’ Compensation Act that are specifically important to the success of the commonwealth’s self-insurance status. The two areas of importance are the PA Code Title 34, Chapter 129, Subchapter C, which outlines the Health and Safety Regulations of a self-insured employer and Article X, established in 1993, that mandates all self-insured employers must maintain an adequate Accident and Illness Prevention Program *(AIPP)*.

All agencies that participate in the commonwealth’s workers’ compensation program are required to maintain an adequate workplace safety and health program. All regulations under Subchapter C and the components of the Accident and Illness Prevention Program must be satisfied to avoid the possibility of the commonwealth’s self-insured status being removed by the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation.

Under the Workers’ Compensation Act, the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation has the authority to audit a self-insured employer’s Accident and Illness Prevention Program and require compliance with the various program elements. If an agency is selected for an audit and the auditor finds any area of the program to be inadequate, this could potentially lead to the entire commonwealth losing their ability to remain self-insured. Each agency’s individual program is vitally important to the success of the commonwealth’s workers’ compensation and safety programs.

Your appointment as the agency’s safety coordinator has given you the responsibility to uphold the standards of the commonwealth workplace safety and health program and the requirements of an Accident and Illness Prevention Program required by the PA Workers’ Compensation Act. Throughout this orientation you will find helpful guides and information to assist you in meeting the necessary requirements of this important program.