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## **VPA's Management System Achieves ISO 9001:2000 Certification**

**NORFOLK, VA** – The Virginia Port Authority [VPA] has become the first port owner and operator on the U.S. East Coast to achieve the ISO 9001:2000 certification, which designates that its quality management system meets a rigorous series of internationally recognized standards.

“This project started last August and since then every process of our quality management system has been examined to make sure that what we do is customer driven, that quality control is paramount and that we are continually focused on improving our delivery of services,” said Jerry A. Bridges, the VPA’s executive director. “Under this system we’ll continually measure our results to ensure that these practices are ongoing. This is not a permanent certification, in order to keep it we have to earn it everyday.”

Bureau Veritas Certification North America Inc., performed the VPA’s audit and certified that the management system complies with the standards set by the International Organization for Standardization [ISO]. Bureau Veritas has certified more than 70,000 companies world wide.

Beginning on May 5, Bureau Veritas auditors began the audit's final phase and conducted random interviews with VPA personnel on the processes surrounding their jobs and combed through the VPA's management system processes, all of which had to be documented in preparation for the audit. The audit ended May 9 and the certification was issued June 5. The VPA hired a private consultant who guided the organization through several steps that prepared it for the certification audit.

The ISO 9001:2000 certification is valid until June 4, 2011, at which time another audit will take place to recertify the VPA. In order to monitor continued compliance with the ISO 9001:2000 certification, the VPA will have "surveillance audits" conducted by an external auditor every six months [May and November] until the recertification audit in 2011. In addition, internal audits will be conducted in between the surveillance audits.

"We will not wait until 2011 to make sure we are following these standards," Bridges said. "We have established an internal audit function that will regularly scrutinize our management system to make sure that we are in compliance. One the most important aspects of this process is a continual, internal examination of how you are conducting business.

"This is something we all had a hand in and an achievement we should be proud of."

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**The Virginia Port Authority (VPA) is an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, reporting to the state Secretary of Transportation. The VPA owns and operates four general cargo facilities on behalf of the state: Norfolk International Terminals, Portsmouth Marine Terminal, Newport News Marine Terminal and the Virginia Inland Port in Warren County. The terminals are operated by Virginia International Terminals, Inc. (VIT) the non-stock, non-profit operating company. The VPA, through terminal earnings generated by VIT, is operationally self-sufficient. The VPA and correlating maritime industry is responsible for 343,000 jobs, \$41 billion in total revenues throughout the Commonwealth.**