

MAY 1, 2009

PROSPECTUS

DWS VARIABLE SERIES I

CLASS A

DWS Capital Growth VIP

This prospectus should be read in conjunction with the variable life insurance or variable annuity contract prospectus and plan documents for tax-qualified plans. These shares are available and are being marketed exclusively as a pooled funding vehicle for life insurance companies writing all types of variable life insurance policies and variable annuity contracts.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) does not approve or disapprove these shares or determine whether the information in this prospectus is truthful or complete. It is a criminal offense for anyone to inform you otherwise.

Table of Contents

How the Portfolio Works

- 3 DWS Capital Growth VIP
- 11 Other Policies and Risks
- 11 The Investment Advisor

Your Investment in the Portfolio

- 14 Buying and Selling Shares
- 17 How the Portfolio Calculates Share Price
- 17 Distributions
- 17 Taxes

How the Portfolio Works

The portfolio is designed to serve as an investment option for certain variable annuity contracts, variable life insurance policies and tax-qualified plans. Your investment in the portfolio is made in conjunction with one of these contracts or policies. The portfolio has its own investment objective and strategy.

Remember that the portfolio is not a bank deposit. The portfolio is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Share prices will go up and down and you could lose money by investing.

Please read this prospectus in conjunction with the prospectus for your variable life insurance policy or variable annuity contract or plan documents for tax-qualified plans.

DWS Capital Growth VIP

The Portfolio's Main Investment Strategy

The portfolio seeks to provide long-term growth of capital.

The portfolio normally invests at least 65% of total assets in equities, mainly common stocks of US companies. Although the portfolio can invest in companies of any size, it intends to invest primarily in companies whose market capitalizations are similar in size to the companies in the Standard & Poor's 500[®] Composite Stock Price Index (the "S&P 500 Index") or the Russell 1000[®] Growth Index (as of February 28, 2009, the S&P 500 Index and the Russell 1000[®] Growth Index had median market capitalizations of \$5 billion and \$2.9 billion, respectively). The portfolio may also invest in other types of equity securities, such as preferred stocks or convertible securities.

In choosing stocks, portfolio management begins by utilizing a proprietary quantitative model to rank stocks based on a number of factors including valuation and profitability. Portfolio management also applies fundamental techniques to identify companies that display above-average earnings growth compared to other companies and that have strong product lines, effective management and leadership positions within core markets. The factors considered and models used by portfolio management may change over time.

Portfolio management will normally sell a stock when portfolio management believes its potential risks have increased, its price is unlikely to go higher, its fundamental factors have changed, other investments offer better opportunities or in the course of adjusting the portfolio's emphasis on a given industry.

Securities Lending. The portfolio may lend its investment securities in an amount up to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % of its total assets to approved institutional borrowers who need to borrow securities in order to complete certain transactions.

Although major changes tend to be infrequent, the Board of Trustees could change the portfolio's investment objective without seeking shareholder approval.

Derivatives and Other Investments

The portfolio is permitted, but not required, to use various types of derivatives (contracts whose value is based on, for example, indices, currencies or securities). Derivatives may be used for hedging and for risk management or for non-hedging purposes to seek to enhance potential gains. The portfolio may use derivatives in circumstances where portfolio management believes they offer an economical means of gaining exposure to a particular asset class or to keep cash on hand to meet shareholder redemptions or other needs while maintaining exposure to the market. In particular, the portfolio may use futures, options and covered call options.

As a temporary defensive measure, the portfolio could shift up to 100% of assets in cash and cash equivalents, US government securities, money market instruments and high quality debt securities without equity features. This measure could prevent losses, but, while engaged in a temporary defensive position, the portfolio will not be pursuing its investment objective. However, portfolio management may choose not to use these strategies for various reasons, even in very volatile market conditions.

The Main Risks of Investing in the Portfolio

There are several risk factors that could hurt the portfolio's performance, cause you to lose money or cause the portfolio's performance to trail that of other investments.

Stock Market Risk. The portfolio is affected by how the stock market performs. To the extent the portfolio invests in a particular capitalization or market sector, the portfolio's performance may be proportionately affected by that segment's general performance. When stock prices fall, you should expect the value of your investment to fall as well. Because a stock represents ownership in its issuer, stock prices can be hurt by poor management, shrinking product demand and other business risks. These factors may affect single companies as well as groups of companies. In addition, movements in financial markets may adversely affect a stock's price, regardless of how well the company performs. The market as a whole may not favor the types of investments the portfolio makes, which could affect the portfolio's ability to sell them at an attractive price.

Growth Investing Risk. Since growth stocks usually reinvest a large portion of earnings in their own businesses, they may lack the dividends associated with value stocks that might otherwise cushion their decline in a falling market. Earnings disappointments in growth stocks often result in sharp price declines because investors buy these stocks for their potential superior earnings growth. Growth stocks may also be out of favor for certain periods in relation to value stocks.

Industry Risk. While the portfolio does not concentrate in any industry, to the extent that the portfolio has exposure to a given industry or sector, any factors affecting that industry or sector could affect the value of portfolio securities. For example, manufacturers of consumer goods could be hurt by a rise in unemployment or technology companies could be hurt by such factors as market saturation, price competition and rapid obsolescence.

Security Selection Risk. A risk that pervades all investing is the risk that the securities in the portfolio's portfolio may decline in value.

Derivatives Risk. Risks associated with derivatives include the risk that the derivative is not well correlated with the security, index or currency to which it relates; the risk that derivatives may result in losses or missed opportunities; the risk that the portfolio will be unable to sell the derivative because of an illiquid secondary market; the risk that a counterparty is unwilling or unable to meet its obligation and the risk that the derivative transaction could expose the portfolio to the effects of leverage, which could increase the portfolio's exposure to the market and magnify potential losses. There is no guarantee that derivatives, to the extent employed, will have the intended effect, and their use could cause lower returns or even losses to the portfolio. The use of derivatives by the portfolio to hedge risk may reduce the opportunity for gain by offsetting the positive effect of favorable price movements.

Securities Lending Risk. Any loss in the market price of securities loaned by the portfolio that occurs during the term of the loan would be borne by the portfolio and would adversely affect the portfolio's performance. Also, there may be delays in recovery of securities loaned or even a loss of rights in the collateral should the borrower of the securities fail financially while the loan is outstanding. However, loans will be made only to borrowers selected by the portfolio's delegate after a review of relevant facts and circumstances, including the creditworthiness of the borrower.

Pricing Risk. At times, market conditions may make it difficult to value some investments, and the portfolio may use certain valuation methodologies for some of its investments, such as fair value pricing. Given the subjective nature of such valuation methodologies, it is possible that the value determined for an investment may be different than the value realized upon such investment's sale. If the portfolio has valued its securities too highly, you may pay too much for portfolio shares when you buy into the portfolio. If the portfolio has underestimated the price of its securities, you may not receive the full market value when you sell your portfolio shares.

Other factors that could affect performance include:

- portfolio management could be wrong in the analysis of industries, companies, economic trends, the relative attractiveness of different securities or other matters.
- foreign securities may be more volatile than their US counterparts, for reasons such as currency fluctuations and political and economic uncertainty.

This portfolio may make sense for investors seeking long-term growth.

Performance — Class A

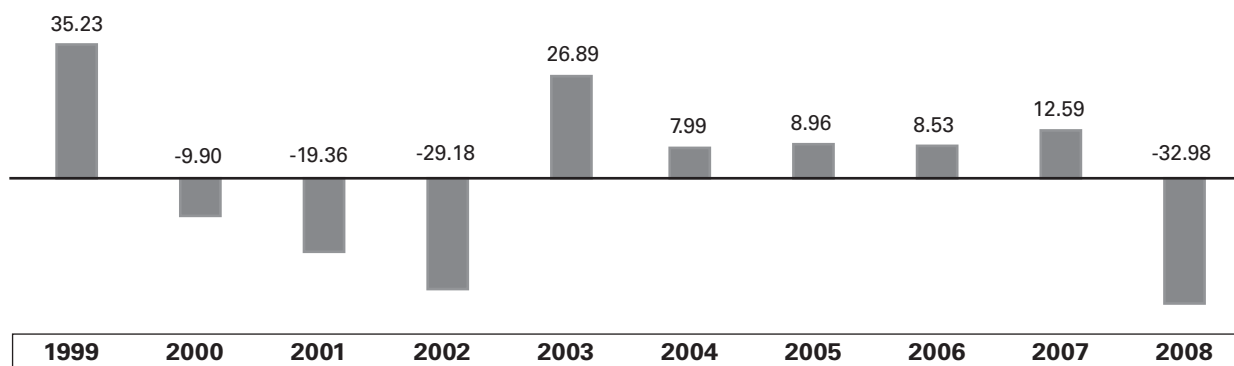
While a portfolio's past performance isn't necessarily a sign of how it will do in the future, it can be valuable for an investor to know.

The bar chart shows how the returns for the portfolio's Class A shares have varied from year to year, which may give some idea of risk. The table shows average annual returns for the portfolio and comparable index information (which, unlike the portfolio, does not have any fees or expenses). The performance of both the portfolio and the comparable index information varies over time. All figures assume reinvestment of dividends and distributions.

This information doesn't reflect charges and fees associated with the separate account that invests in the portfolio or any variable life insurance policy or variable annuity contract for which the portfolio is an investment option. These charges and fees will reduce returns.

Prior to February 15, 2009, the portfolio operated with a different investment strategy. Performance would have been different if the portfolio's current investment strategy had been in effect.

Annual Total Return (%) as of 12/31 each year — Class A



For the periods included in the bar chart:

Best Quarter: 24.86%, Q4 1999

Worst Quarter: -21.49%, Q4 2008

2009 Total Return as of March 31: -7.08%

Average Annual Total Returns (%) as of 12/31/2008

	1 Year	5 Years	10 Years
Portfolio — Class A	-32.98	-0.74	-1.60
Russell 1000 [®] Growth Index	-38.44	-3.42	-4.27
Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500 Index	-37.00	-2.19	-1.38

Total returns would have been lower if operating expenses hadn't been reduced.

On April 1, 2009, the Russell 1000 Growth Index replaced the Standard & Poor's 500 Index as the portfolio's benchmark index because the Advisor believes that it more accurately reflects the portfolio's investment strategy.

Russell 1000[®] Growth Index is an unmanaged index that consists of those stocks in the Russell 1000[®] Index that have higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values. Russell 1000[®] Index is an unmanaged price-only index of the 1,000 largest capitalized companies that are domiciled in the US and whose common stocks are traded.

Standard & Poor's 500 Index (S&P 500) is an unmanaged, capitalization-weighted index of 500 stocks. The index is designed to measure performance of the broad domestic economy through changes in the aggregate market value of 500 stocks representing all major industries.

Additional Performance Information. Owen Fitzpatrick, Lead Manager to the portfolio, previously managed private accounts with substantially similar investment objectives, policies and strategies as the portfolio when he was employed by Deutsche Bank Private Wealth Management. See the section entitled "Additional Performance Information" for more information. This performance does not represent the performance of the portfolio and should not be considered an indication of future performance of the portfolio.

Current performance information may be higher or lower than the performance data quoted above. For more recent performance information, contact your participating insurance company.

How Much Investors Pay

This table describes the fees and expenses that you may pay if you buy and hold portfolio shares. The information in the table does not reflect charges and fees associated with the separate account that invests in the portfolio or any variable life insurance policy or variable annuity contract for which the portfolio is an investment option. These charges and fees will increase expenses.

Fee Table	Class A
Annual Operating Expenses , deducted from portfolio assets	
Management Fee	0.37%
Distribution/Service (12b-1) Fee	None
Other Expenses ¹	0.13
Total Annual Operating Expenses	0.50
Less Fee Waiver/Expense Reimbursement	0.01
Net Annual Operating Expenses^{2,3}	0.49

¹ "Other Expenses" include an administrative services fee paid to the Advisor in the amount of 0.10% of average daily net assets.

² Through April 30, 2010, the Advisor has contractually agreed to waive all or a portion of its management fee and reimburse or pay certain operating expenses of the portfolio to the extent necessary to maintain the portfolio's total operating expenses at 0.49% for Class A shares, excluding certain expenses such as extraordinary expenses, taxes, brokerage and interest.

³ Except as otherwise noted, the information in the table is based on amounts incurred during the portfolio's most recent fiscal year. It is important for investors to understand that a decline in the portfolio's average net assets during the current fiscal year due to recent unprecedented market volatility or other factors could cause the portfolio's expense ratios for the portfolio's current fiscal year to be higher than the expense information presented. Based on asset levels as of December 31, 2008, the gross annualized expense ratio of Class A shares is estimated at 0.53%. For more current expense information, see "Financial Highlights" in the portfolio's future annual or semi-annual reports.

Based on the costs above (including one year of capped expenses in each period), this example helps you compare the expenses of Class A shares to those of other mutual funds. This example assumes the expenses above remain the same. It also assumes that you invested \$10,000, earned 5% annual returns, reinvested all dividends and distributions and sold your shares at the end of each period. This is only an example; actual expenses will be different.

Example	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years
Class A shares	\$50	\$159	\$279	\$627

The Portfolio Managers

The portfolio is managed by a team of investment professionals who collaborate to implement the portfolio's investment strategy. The team is led by a lead portfolio manager who is responsible for developing the portfolio's investment strategy. Each portfolio manager on the team has authority over all aspects of the portfolio's investment portfolio, including but not limited to, purchases and sales of individual securities, portfolio construction techniques, portfolio risk assessment and the management of daily cash flows in accordance with portfolio holdings.

The following people handle the day-to-day management of the portfolio:

Owen Fitzpatrick, CFA

Managing Director of Deutsche Asset Management and Lead Portfolio Manager of the portfolio.

- Joined Deutsche Asset Management and the portfolio in 2009.
- Prior to joining Deutsche Asset Management, he was Managing Director of Deutsche Bank Private Wealth Management and served as head of U.S. Equity Strategy and manager of the U.S. large cap core, value and growth portfolios and member of the U.S. Investment Committee and head of the Equity Strategy Group.
- Previous experience includes over 21 years of experience in trust and investment management. Prior to joining Deutsche Bank in 1995, he managed an equity income fund, trust and advisory relationships for Princeton Bank & Trust Company, where he was also responsible for research coverage of the consumer cyclical sector. Prior to that, he served as a portfolio manager at Manufacturer's Hanover Trust Company.
- BA and MBA, Fordham University.

Richard Shepley

Managing Director of Deutsche Asset Management and Portfolio Manager of the portfolio.

- Joined Deutsche Asset Management in 1998 and the portfolio in 2007.
- Previous experience includes eight years of investment industry experience as research analyst for global beverage and media sectors at Newton Investment Management and assistant manager in corporate tax and corporate insolvency department at PriceWaterhouse, London.
- MA, Oxford University.

Brendan O'Neill, CFA

Director of Deutsche Asset Management and Portfolio Manager of the portfolio.

- Joined Deutsche Asset Management in 2000 and the portfolio in 2009.
- Equity Research Analyst covering the financial services sector since 2001.
- Previously served as a member of the Large Cap Core Equity team.
- BA, Queens College, CUNY; MS, Zicklin School of Business, Baruch College.

The portfolio's Statement of Additional Information provides additional information about a portfolio manager's investments in the portfolio, a description of the portfolio management compensation structure, and information regarding other accounts managed.

Additional Performance Information

The table below illustrates the performance of a composite of certain private accounts (“Accounts”) managed by **Owen Fitzpatrick**, Lead Manager to DWS Capital Growth VIP, while employed by Deutsche Bank Private Wealth Management. For more information about Owen Fitzpatrick, please refer to the “Portfolio management” section of this prospectus. Each of the Accounts included in the composite has objectives, policies and strategies substantially similar to those of the portfolio. As of December 31, 2008, the total assets in the composite were \$328 million.

Unlike management of the private accounts included in the composite, Owen Fitzpatrick’s management of the portfolio is subject to certain regulatory restrictions (e.g., limits on percentage of assets invested in a single issuer and industry and requirements on distributing income to shareholders) that do not apply to the Accounts. In addition, the portfolio generally experiences cash flows that are different from those of the Accounts. All of these factors may adversely affect the performance of the portfolio and cause it to differ from that of the Accounts in the composite described below.

Composite results below represent the performance of the Accounts, net of the annual rate of estimated total operating expenses of portfolio’s Class B shares, as of December 31, 2008. **The composite results do not represent the performance of the portfolio and should not be considered an indication of future performance of the portfolio.** The composite results are not required to be, and were not calculated in accordance with SEC mandated mutual fund performance calculation methodology. The use of such methodology could yield a different result.

Average Annual Total Return (%)** (as of December 31, 2008)	1 Year	3 Years	Since Inception*
Fee Adjusted, No-Load <i>(reflects no deduction for sales charge)</i>	-33.57%	-2.51%	0.76%
Russell 1000® Growth Index <i>(reflects no deductions for fees, expenses or taxes)</i>	-38.44%	-9.11%	-3.76%
Standard & Poor’s 500 Index <i>(reflects no deductions for fees, expenses or taxes)</i>	-37.00%	-8.36%	-2.65%

* Date of Inception is April 1, 2004 which corresponds to the date that Mr. Fitzpatrick became the sole, lead portfolio manager of the Accounts.

** Average Annual Total Returns reflect the gross returns of the Accounts reduced by the estimated net annual operating expenses of the DWS Capital Growth VIP - Class B shares (0.82% annually). Actual fees and expenses of the Accounts may have been more or less than those of the portfolio. Returns reflect the reinvestment of dividends and distributions.

Russell 1000® Growth Index is an unmanaged index that consists of those stocks in the Russell 1000® Index that have higher price-to-book ratios and higher forecasted growth values. Russell 1000® Index is an unmanaged price-only index of the 1,000 largest capitalized companies that are domiciled in the US and whose common stocks are traded.

Standard & Poor’s 500 Index (S&P 500) is an unmanaged, capitalization-weighted index of 500 stocks. The index is designed to measure performance of the broad domestic economy through changes in the aggregate market value of 500 stocks representing all major industries.

Financial Highlights

This table is designed to help you understand the portfolio's financial performance. The figures in the first part of the table are for a single share. The total return figures represent the percentage that an investor in the portfolio would have earned (or lost), assuming all dividends and distributions were reinvested. This information has been audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, whose report, along with the portfolio's financial statements, is included in the portfolio's annual report (see "Shareholder reports" on the back cover).

The following table includes selected data for a share outstanding throughout each period and other performance information derived from the financial statements.

This information doesn't reflect charges and fees associated with the separate account that invests in the portfolio or any variable life insurance policy or variable annuity contract for which the portfolio is an investment option. These charges and fees will reduce returns.

DWS Capital Growth VIP – Class A

Years Ended December 31,	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Selected Per Share Data					
Net asset value, beginning of period	\$ 20.41	\$18.24	\$16.90	\$15.67	\$14.59
<i>Income (loss) from investment operations:</i>					
Net investment income (loss) ^a	.16	.17 ^d	.13 ^c	.10	.14
Net realized and unrealized gain (loss)	(6.83)	2.12	1.31	1.29	1.02
Total from investment operations	(6.67)	2.29	1.44	1.39	1.16
<i>Less distributions from:</i>					
Net investment income	(.19)	(.12)	(.10)	(.16)	(.08)
Net asset value, end of period	\$ 13.55	\$20.41	\$18.24	\$16.90	\$15.67
Total Return (%)	(32.98) ^b	12.59 ^b	8.53 ^{b,c}	8.96 ^b	7.99
Ratios to Average Net Assets and Supplemental Data					
Net assets, end of period (\$ millions)	594	1,058	1,131	1,031	698
Ratio of expenses before expense reductions (%)	.50	.53	.52	.50	.50
Ratio of expenses after expense reductions (%)	.49	.52	.49	.49	.50
Ratio of net investment income (loss) (%)	.89	.86 ^d	.73 ^c	.61	.98
Portfolio turnover rate (%)	21	30	16	17	15

^a Based on average shares outstanding during the period.

^b Total return would have been lower had certain expenses not been reduced.

^c Includes non-recurring income from the Advisor recorded as a result of an administrative proceeding regarding disclosure of brokerage allocation practices in connection with sales of DWS Funds. The non-recurring income resulted in an increase in net investment income of \$0.007 per share and an increase in the ratio of net investment income of 0.04%. Excluding this non-recurring income, total return would have been 0.03% lower.

^d Net investment income per share and ratio of net investment income include non-recurring dividend income amounting to \$0.03 per share and 0.17% of average daily net assets, respectively.

Hypothetical Expense Summary

Using the annual portfolio operating expense ratios presented in the fee tables in the portfolio prospectus, the Hypothetical Expense Summary shows the estimated fees and expenses, in actual dollars, that would be charged on a hypothetical investment of \$10,000 in the portfolio held for the next 10 years and the impact of such fees and expenses on portfolio returns for each year and cumulatively, assuming a 5% return for each year. The historical rate of return for the portfolio may be higher or lower than 5% and, for money funds, is typically less than 5%. The tables also assume that all dividends and distributions are reinvested. The annual portfolio expense ratios shown are net of any contractual fee waivers or expense reimbursements, if any, for the period of the contractual commitment. Also, please note that if you are investing through a third party provider, that provider may have fees and expenses separate from those of the portfolio that are not reflected here. Mutual fund fees and expenses fluctuate over time and actual expenses may be higher or lower than those shown.

The Hypothetical Expense Summary should not be used or construed as an offer to sell, a solicitation of an offer to buy or a recommendation or endorsement of any specific mutual fund. You should carefully review the portfolio's prospectus to consider the investment objectives, risks, expenses and charges of the portfolio prior to investing.

DWS Capital Growth VIP — Class A

	Maximum Sales Charge: 0.00%	Initial Hypothetical Investment: \$10,000		Assumed Rate of Return: 5%	
Year	Cumulative Return Before Fees and Expenses	Annual Fund Expense Ratios	Cumulative Return After Fees and Expenses	Hypothetical Year-End Balance After Fees and Expenses	Annual Fees and Expenses
1	5.00%	0.49%	4.51%	\$10,451.00	\$ 50.10
2	10.25%	0.50%	9.21%	\$10,921.30	\$ 53.43
3	15.76%	0.50%	14.13%	\$11,412.75	\$ 55.84
4	21.55%	0.50%	19.26%	\$11,926.33	\$ 58.35
5	27.63%	0.50%	24.63%	\$12,463.01	\$ 60.97
6	34.01%	0.50%	30.24%	\$13,023.85	\$ 63.72
7	40.71%	0.50%	36.10%	\$13,609.92	\$ 66.58
8	47.75%	0.50%	42.22%	\$14,222.37	\$ 69.58
9	55.13%	0.50%	48.62%	\$14,862.37	\$ 72.71
10	62.89%	0.50%	55.31%	\$15,531.18	\$ 75.98
Total					\$627.26

Other Policies and Risks

While the previous pages describe the main points of the portfolio's strategy and risks, there are a few other issues to know about:

- The portfolio may trade securities actively. This could raise transaction costs and, accordingly, lower performance.
- The Advisor will establish a debt security's credit quality when it buys a security, using independent ratings, or for unrated securities, its own credit determination. When ratings don't agree, the portfolio will use the higher rating. If a debt security's credit quality falls, the Advisor or subadvisor will determine whether selling it would be in the portfolio's best interests.

For more information

This prospectus doesn't tell you about every policy or risk of investing in the portfolio.

If you want more information on the portfolio's allowable securities and investment practices and the characteristics and risks of each one, you may want to request a copy of the Statement of Additional Information (the back cover tells you how to do this).

Keep in mind that there is no assurance that the portfolio will achieve its investment objective.

A complete list of the portfolio's portfolio holdings as of the month-end is posted on www.dws-investments.com on or about the 15th day of the following month. More frequent posting of portfolio holdings information may be made from time to time on www.dws-investments.com. The posted portfolio holdings information is available by portfolio and generally remains accessible at least until the date on which the portfolio files its Form N-CSR or N-Q with the Securities and Exchange Commission for the period that includes the date as of which the posted information is current. The portfolio's Statement of Additional Information includes a description of the portfolio's policies and procedures with respect to the disclosure of the portfolio's portfolio holdings.

The Investment Advisor

Deutsche Investment Management Americas Inc. ("DIMA" or the "Advisor"), is the investment advisor for the portfolio. Under the supervision of the Board Members, the Advisor, with headquarters at 345 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10154 makes portfolio investment decisions, buys and sells securities for the portfolio and conducts research that leads to these purchase and sale decisions. The Advisor provides a full range of global investment advisory services to institutional and retail clients.

DWS Investments is part of Deutsche Asset Management, which is the marketing name in the US for the asset management activities of Deutsche Bank AG, DIMA, Deutsche Bank Trust Company Americas and DWS Trust Company.

Deutsche Asset Management is a global asset management organization that offers a wide range of investing expertise and resources, including hundreds of portfolio managers and analysts and an office network that reaches the world's major investment centers. This well-resourced global investment platform brings together a wide variety of experience and investment insight across industries, regions, asset classes and investing styles.

The Advisor is an indirect, wholly owned subsidiary of Deutsche Bank AG. Deutsche Bank AG is a major global banking institution that is engaged in a wide range of financial services, including investment management, mutual funds, retail, private and commercial banking, investment banking and insurance.

The Advisor receives a management fee from the portfolio. Below is the management rate paid by the portfolio for the most recent fiscal year, as a percentage of the portfolio's average daily net assets:

Portfolio Name	Fee Paid
DWS Capital Growth VIP	0.36%*

* Reflecting the effect of expense limitations and/or fee waivers then in effect.

A discussion regarding the basis for the Board renewal of the portfolio's investment management agreement is contained in the shareholder reports for the annual period ended December 31, 2008 (see "Shareholder reports" on the back cover).

In addition, under a separate administrative services agreement between the portfolio and Deutsche Investment Management Americas Inc., the portfolio pays the Advisor for providing most of the portfolio's administrative services.

Your Investment in the Portfolio

The information in this section may affect anyone who selects the portfolio as an investment option in a variable annuity contract or variable life insurance policy that offers the portfolio. These contracts and policies are described in separate prospectuses issued by participating insurance companies. The portfolio assumes no responsibility for such prospectuses.

Policies about transactions

The information in this prospectus applies to Class A shares of the portfolio. The portfolio may offer two classes of shares. Class A shares are offered at net asset value and are not subject to 12b-1 fees.

Technically, the shareholders of DWS Variable Series I (which include the portfolio just described) are the participating insurance companies (the “insurance companies”) that offer the portfolio as choices for holders of certain variable annuity contracts or variable life insurance policies (the “contract(s)”) issued or sponsored by the insurance companies. The insurance companies may pass through voting rights to the contract owners. The portfolio does not sell shares directly to the public. The portfolio sells shares only to separate accounts of insurance companies. As a contract owner, your premium payments are allocated to the portfolio by the insurance companies in accordance with your contract. Please see the contract prospectus that accompanies this prospectus for a detailed explanation of your contract.

Please bear in mind that there are important differences between funds available to any investor (a “Retail Fund”) and those that are only available through certain financial institutions, such as insurance companies. For example, Retail Funds, unlike the portfolio, are not sold to insurance company separate accounts to fund investments in variable insurance contracts. In addition, the investment objective, policies and strategies of the portfolio, while similar to those of a Retail Fund, are not identical. Retail Funds may be smaller or larger than the portfolio and have different expense ratios than the portfolio. As a result, the performance of the portfolio and a Retail Fund will differ.

Should any conflict between contract owners arise that would require that a substantial amount of net assets be withdrawn from the portfolio, orderly portfolio management could be disrupted to the potential detriment of shareholders of the portfolio.

The portfolio has a verification process for new insurance company accounts to help the government fight the funding of terrorism and money laundering activities. Federal law requires all financial institutions to obtain, verify and record information that identifies each insurance company that opens an account. This means that when an insurance company opens an account, the portfolio will ask for its name, address and other information that will allow the portfolio to identify the company. This information will be verified to ensure the identity of all insurance companies opening an account.

For certain insurance companies, the portfolio might request additional information (for instance, the portfolio would ask for documents such as the insurance company’s articles of incorporation) to help the portfolio verify the insurance company’s identity.

The portfolio will not complete the purchase of any shares for an account until all information has been provided and the application has been submitted in “good order.” Once the application is determined to be in good order, the purchase(s) will be effected at the net asset value per share next calculated.

The portfolio may reject a new account application if the insurance company doesn’t provide any required or requested identifying information, or for other reasons.

Buying and Selling Shares

The **portfolio is open for business** each day the New York Stock Exchange is open. The portfolio calculates its share price every business day, as of the close of regular trading on the New York Stock Exchange (typically 4 p.m. Eastern time, but sometimes earlier, as in the case of scheduled half-day trading or unscheduled suspensions of trading).

The portfolio continuously sells shares to each insurance company separate account, without a sales charge, at the net asset value per share next determined after a proper purchase order is placed by the insurance company. The insurance company offers contract owners units in its separate accounts which correspond to shares in a portfolio. Each insurance company submits purchase and redemption orders to a portfolio based on allocation instructions for premium payments, transfer instructions and surrender or partial withdrawal requests for contract owners, as set forth in the accompanying prospectus for the contracts. These orders reflect the amount of premium payments to be invested, surrender and transfer requests, and other matters. Redemption orders are effected at the next net asset value per share determined after a proper redemption order is placed by the insurance company. Contract owners should look at their contract prospectuses for redemption procedures and fees.

Important information about buying and selling shares

- After receiving a contract owner's order, the insurance company buys or sells shares at the net asset value next calculated on any day the portfolio is open for business.
- Unless otherwise instructed, the portfolio normally makes payment of the proceeds from the sale of shares the next business day but always within seven calendar days.
- The portfolio does not issue share certificates.
- The portfolio reserves the right to reject purchases of shares for any reason.
- The portfolio reserves the right to withdraw or suspend the offering of shares at any time.
- The portfolio reserves the right to reject purchases of shares or to suspend or postpone redemptions at times when the New York Stock Exchange is closed (other than customary closings), trading is restricted or when an emergency exists that prevents a portfolio from disposing of its portfolio securities or pricing its shares.
- The portfolio may refuse, cancel or rescind any purchase order; freeze any account (meaning the insurance company will not be able to purchase shares in its account); suspend account services; and/or involuntarily redeem the account if we think that the account is being used for fraudulent or illegal purposes by the insurance company; one or more of these actions will be taken when, at the sole discretion of the portfolio, they are deemed to be in the portfolio's best interests or when the portfolio is requested or compelled to do so by governmental authority or by applicable law.
- The portfolio may close and liquidate an account if a portfolio is unable to verify provided information, or for other reasons; if a portfolio decides to close the account, the shares will be redeemed at the net asset value per share next calculated after we determine to close the account; the insurance company may be subject to gain or loss on the redemption of the portfolio shares and may incur tax liability.
- The portfolio may pay for shares sold by "redeeming in kind," that is, by distributing to you marketable securities (which typically will involve brokerage costs for you to liquidate) rather than cash, but which will be taxable to the same extent as a redemption for cash; the portfolio generally won't make a redemption in kind unless your requests over a 90-day period total more than \$250,000 or 1% of the value of the portfolio's net assets, whichever is less.
- A purchase order from an insurance company separate account may not be accepted if the sale of portfolio shares has been suspended or if it is determined that the purchase would be detrimental to the interests of the portfolio.

Market Timing Policies and Procedures. Short-term and excessive trading of portfolio shares may present risks to the portfolio's long-term shareholders (as used herein, the term "shareholders" may refer to the contract owners), including potential dilution in the value of portfolio shares, interference with the efficient management of a portfolio (including losses on the sale of investments), taxable gains to remaining shareholders and increased brokerage and administrative costs. These risks may be more pronounced if the

portfolio invests in certain securities such as those that trade in foreign markets, are illiquid or do not otherwise have “readily available market quotations.” Certain investors may seek to employ short-term trading strategies aimed at exploiting variations in portfolio valuation that arise from the nature of the securities held by the portfolio (e.g., “time zone arbitrage”). The portfolio has adopted policies and procedures that are intended to detect and deter short-term and excessive trading.

Pursuant to these policies, the portfolio reserves the right to reject or cancel a purchase or exchange order for any reason without prior notice. For example, the portfolio may in its discretion reject or cancel a purchase or an exchange order even if the transaction is not subject to the specific roundtrip transaction limitation described below if the Advisor believes that there appears to be a pattern of short-term or excessive trading activity by a shareholder or deems any other trading activity harmful or disruptive to the portfolio. The portfolio, through its Advisor and transfer agent, will measure short-term and excessive trading by the number of roundtrip transactions within a shareholder’s account during a rolling 12-month period. A “roundtrip” transaction is defined as any combination of purchase and redemption activity (including exchanges) of the same portfolio’s shares. The portfolio may take other trading activity into account if the portfolio believes such activity is of an amount or frequency that may be harmful to long-term shareholders or disruptive to portfolio management.

Shareholders are limited to four roundtrip transactions in the same portfolio over a rolling 12-month period. Shareholders with four or more roundtrip transactions in the same portfolio within a rolling 12-month period generally will be blocked from making additional purchases of, or exchanges into, that portfolio. The portfolio has sole discretion whether to remove a block from a shareholder’s account. The rights of a shareholder to redeem shares of the portfolio are not affected by the four roundtrip transaction limitation.

The Advisor may make exceptions to the roundtrip transaction policy for certain types of transactions if in its opinion the transactions do not represent short-term or excessive trading or are not abusive or harmful to the portfolio, such as, but not limited to, systematic transactions, required minimum retirement distributions, transactions initiated by the portfolio or administrator and transactions by certain qualified fund-of-fund(s).

In certain circumstances, the portfolio may rely upon the policy of the insurance company or other financial intermediary to deter short-term or excessive trading if the Advisor believes that the policy of such insurance company or other financial intermediary is reasonably designed to detect and deter transactions that are not in the best interests of the portfolio. An insurance company’s or other financial intermediary’s policy relating to short-term or excessive trading may be more or less restrictive than the portfolio’s policies, may permit certain transactions not permitted by the portfolio’s policies, or prohibit transactions not subject to the portfolio’s policies.

The Advisor may also accept undertakings from an insurance company or other financial intermediary to enforce short-term or excessive trading policies on behalf of the portfolio that provide a substantially similar level of protection for the portfolio against such transactions. For example, certain insurance companies may have contractual or legal restrictions, or operational constraints, that prevent them from blocking an account. In such instances, the Advisor may permit the insurance company to use alternate techniques that the Advisor considers to be a reasonable substitute for such a block.

In addition, to the extent that the portfolio invests some portion of its assets in foreign securities, the portfolio has adopted certain fair valuation practices intended to protect the portfolio from “time zone arbitrage” with respect to its foreign securities holdings and other trading practices that seek to exploit variations in portfolio valuation that arise from the nature of the securities held by the portfolio. (See “How the Portfolio Calculates Share Price.”)

There is no assurance that these policies and procedures will be effective in limiting short-term and excessive trading in all cases. For example, the Advisor may not be able to effectively monitor, detect or limit short-term or excessive trading by underlying contract holders that occurs through separate accounts maintained by insurance companies or other financial intermediaries. The Advisor reviews trading activity at the separate account level to detect short-term or excessive trading. If the Advisor has reason to suspect that short-term or excessive trading is occurring at the separate account level, the Advisor will contact the insurance company or other financial intermediary to request underlying shareholder level activity. Depending on the amount of portfolio shares held in such separate account (which may represent most of the portfolio’s shares), short-term and/or excessive trading of portfolio shares could adversely affect long-term shareholders in the portfolio. If short-term or excessive trading is identified, the Advisor will take appropriate action.

The portfolio’s market timing policies and procedures may be modified or terminated at any time.

How to receive account information

If you are a contract owner, you should contact your insurance company or the organization that provides record keeping services for information about your account.

Please see the contract prospectus that accompanies this prospectus for the customer service phone number.

How to select shares

Shares in the portfolio are available in connection with certain variable annuity and life insurance arrangements. Each insurance company has different provisions about how and when their contract owners may select portfolio shares. Each insurance company is responsible for communicating its contract owners' instructions to the portfolio. Contract owners should contact their insurance company to effect transactions in connection with the portfolio.

Financial intermediary support payments

The Advisor, DWS Investments Distributors, Inc. (the "Distributor") and/or their affiliates may pay additional compensation, out of their own assets and not as an additional charge to the portfolio, to selected affiliated and unaffiliated brokers, dealers, participating insurance companies or other financial intermediaries ("financial advisors") in connection with the sale and/or distribution of portfolio shares or the retention and/or servicing of fund investors and fund shares ("revenue sharing"). Such revenue sharing payments are in addition to any distribution or service fees payable under any Rule 12b-1 or service plan of the portfolio, any record keeping/sub-transfer agency/networking fees payable by the portfolio (generally through the Distributor or an affiliate) and/or the Distributor to certain financial advisors for performing such services and any sales charge, commissions, non-cash compensation arrangements expressly permitted under applicable rules of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority or other concessions described in the fee table or elsewhere in this prospectus or the Statement of Additional Information as payable to all financial advisors. For example, the Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates may compensate financial advisors for providing the portfolio with "shelf space" or access to a third party platform or portfolio offering list or other marketing programs, including, without limitation, inclusion of the portfolio on preferred or recommended sales lists, mutual fund "supermarket" platforms and other formal sales programs; granting the Distributor access to the financial advisor's sales force; granting the Distributor access to the financial advisor's conferences and meetings; assistance in training and educating the financial advisor's personnel; and obtaining other forms of marketing support.

The level of revenue sharing payments made to financial advisors may be a fixed fee or based upon one or more of the following factors: gross sales, current assets and/or number of accounts of the portfolio attributable to the financial advisor, the particular portfolio or portfolio type or other measures as agreed to by the Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates and the financial advisors or any combination thereof. The amount of these revenue sharing payments is determined at the discretion of the Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates from time to time, may be substantial, and may be different for different financial advisors based on, for example, the nature of the services provided by the financial advisor.

The Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates currently make revenue sharing payments from their own assets in connection with the sale and/or distribution of DWS fund shares or the retention and/or servicing of investors and DWS fund shares to financial advisors in amounts that generally range from .01% up to .50% of assets of the portfolio serviced and maintained by the financial advisor, .05% to .25% of sales of the portfolio attributable to the financial advisor, a flat fee of \$13,350 up to \$500,000, or any combination thereof. These amounts are subject to change at the discretion of the Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates. Receipt of, or the prospect of receiving, this additional compensation may influence your financial advisor's recommendation of the portfolio or of any particular share class of the portfolio. You should review your financial advisor's compensation disclosure and/or talk to your financial advisor to obtain more information on how this compensation may have influenced your financial advisor's recommendation of the portfolio. Additional information regarding these revenue sharing payments is included in the portfolio's Statement of Additional Information, which is available to you on request at no charge (see the back cover of this prospectus for more information on how to request a copy of the Statement of Additional Information).

The Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates may also make such revenue sharing payments to financial advisors under the terms discussed above in connection with the distribution of both DWS funds and non-DWS funds by financial advisors to retirement plans that obtain record keeping services from ADP, Inc. on the DWS

Investments branded retirement plan platform (the “Platform”) with the level of revenue sharing payments being based upon sales of both the DWS funds and the non-DWS funds by the financial advisor on the Platform or current assets of both the DWS funds and the non-DWS funds serviced and maintained by the financial advisor on the Platform.

It is likely that broker-dealers that execute portfolio transactions for the portfolio will include firms that also sell shares of the DWS funds to their customers. However, the Advisor will not consider sales of DWS fund shares as a factor in the selection of broker-dealers to execute portfolio transactions for the DWS funds. Accordingly, the Advisor has implemented policies and procedures reasonably designed to prevent its traders from considering sales of DWS fund shares as a factor in the selection of broker-dealers to execute portfolio transactions for the portfolio. In addition, the Advisor, the Distributor and/or their affiliates will not use fund brokerage to pay for their obligation to provide additional compensation to financial advisors as described above.

How the Portfolio Calculates Share Price

To calculate net asset value per share, or NAV, the portfolio uses the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{TOTAL ASSETS} - \text{TOTAL LIABILITIES}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF SHARES OUTSTANDING}} = \text{NAV}$$

The price at which you buy and sell shares for the portfolio is the NAV.

We typically value securities using information furnished by an independent pricing service or market quotations, where appropriate. However, we may use methods approved by the Board, such as a fair valuation model, which are intended to reflect fair value when pricing service information or market quotations are not readily available or when a security’s value or a meaningful portion of the value of a portfolio is believed to have been materially affected by a significant event, such as a natural disaster, an economic event like a bankruptcy filing, or a substantial fluctuation in domestic or foreign markets, that has occurred between the close of the exchange or market on which the security is principally traded (for example, a foreign exchange or market) and the close of the New York Stock Exchange. In such a case, a portfolio’s value for a security is likely to be different from the last quoted market price or pricing service information. In addition, due to the subjective and variable nature of fair value pricing, it is possible that the value determined for a particular asset may be materially different from the value realized upon such asset’s sale. It is expected that the greater the percentage of portfolio assets that is invested in non-US securities, the more extensive will be a portfolio’s use of fair value pricing. This is intended to reduce a portfolio’s exposure to “time zone arbitrage” and other harmful trading practices. (See “Market Timing Policies and Procedures.”)

To the extent that the portfolio invests in securities that are traded primarily in foreign markets, the value of its holdings could change at a time when you aren’t able to buy or sell portfolio shares through the contract. This is because some foreign markets are open on days and at times when the portfolio doesn’t price the shares.

Distributions

The portfolio intends to declare and distribute dividends from its net investment income and capital gains, if any, annually. The portfolio may make additional distributions if necessary.

All distributions will be reinvested in shares of a portfolio unless we are informed by an insurance company that they should be paid out in cash. The insurance companies will be informed about the amount and character of distributions from the relevant portfolio for federal income tax purposes.

Taxes

The portfolio intends to qualify each year as a regulated investment company under Subchapter M of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”), and intends to meet all requirements necessary to avoid paying any federal income or excise taxes.

Generally, owners of variable annuity and variable life contracts are not subject to current federal income taxation on income or gains realized with respect to such contracts. However, some distributions from such contracts, whether made prior to or during the annuity payment period, may be taxable at ordinary income tax rates. In addition, distributions made to an owner who is younger than 59½ may be subject to a 10% penalty tax. For further information concerning federal income tax consequences for the holders of variable annuity contracts and variable life insurance policies, such holders should consult the prospectus used in connection with the issuance of their particular contracts or policies.

In order for investors to receive the favorable federal income tax treatment available to holders of variable annuity and variable life contracts, the separate accounts underlying such contracts, as well as the funds in which such accounts invest, must meet certain diversification requirements. The portfolio intends to comply with these requirements. If a portfolio or separate account does not meet such requirements or fails to qualify as a regulated investment company for any taxable year, income allocable to the contracts associated with the separate account may be taxable currently for federal income tax purposes to the holders of such contracts and income from prior periods with respect to such contracts also could be taxable, most likely in the year of the failure.

Under Treasury regulations, insurance companies holding the separate accounts may have to report to the IRS losses above a certain amount resulting from a sale or disposition of a portfolio's shares.

The discussion above is generally based on the assumption that shares of a portfolio will be respected as owned by insurance company separate accounts. If this is not the case (for example, because the IRS finds an impermissible level of "investor control" over the investment options underlying variable contracts), the advantageous federal income tax treatment provided in respect of insurance company separate accounts under the Code will no longer be available, and the person or persons determined to own the portfolio shares will be currently taxed on portfolio distributions, and on the proceeds of any redemption of portfolio shares, under the Code.

Portfolio investments in securities of foreign issuers may be subject to withholding and other taxes at the source, including on dividend or interest payments. Participating insurance companies should consult their own tax advisors as to whether such distributions are subject to federal income tax if they are retained as part of policy reserves.

The portfolio's investments in certain debt obligations may cause the portfolio to recognize taxable income in excess of the cash generated by such obligation. Thus, the portfolio could be required at times to liquidate other investments in order to satisfy its distribution requirements.

The preceding is a brief summary of certain of the relevant federal income tax considerations. Because each shareholder and contract holder's tax situation is unique, ask your tax professional about the tax consequences of your investments, including possible federal, foreign, state or local taxes.

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To Get More Information

Shareholder reports — These include commentary from the portfolio’s management team about recent market conditions and the effects of the portfolio’s strategies on its performance. They also have detailed performance figures, a list of everything the portfolio owns, and its financial statements. Shareholders get these reports automatically.

Statement of Additional Information (SAI) — This tells you more about the portfolio’s features and policies, including additional risk information. The SAI is incorporated by reference into this document (meaning that it’s legally part of this prospectus).

For a free copy of any of these documents or to request other information about the portfolio, call (800) 778-1482, or contact DWS Investments at the address listed below. The portfolio’s SAI and shareholder reports are also available through the DWS Investments Web site at www.dws-investments.com. These documents and other information about the portfolio are available from the EDGAR Database on the SEC’s Internet site at www.sec.gov. If you like, you may obtain copies of this information, after paying a copying fee, by e-mailing a request to publicinfo@sec.gov or by writing the SEC at the address listed below. You can also review and copy these documents and other information about the portfolio, including the portfolio’s SAI, at the SEC’s Public Reference Room in Washington, D.C. Information on the operation of the SEC’s Public Reference Room may be obtained by calling (800) SEC-0330.

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