

International Conference on Human and Organizational Aspects of Assuring Nuclear Safety – Exploring 30 Years of Safety Culture



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Safety Culture & Beliefs in the Nuclear Industry: Looking Forward, Looking Back

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Synopsis

This Keynote considers the role that the notion of safety culture has played in management of safety in the nuclear industry over recent decades. It does so through the lens of the industry's beliefs about how such a notion might be applied to better understanding and preventing safety failures.

Over the last 30 years, the nuclear industry has come to accept both the concept of safety culture and the possible role that it might play in safety management and safety failure. This development is to be welcomed in general terms but is not without its shortcomings in practice. These largely concern the operationalization of the concept and the way that it is often measured and managed. So what are the issues around the way that much of the industry currently believes that the notion of safety should be applied?

The Keynote addresses this question. In doing so, it explores the changes that might be necessary for a fair test of the utility of safety culture in determining the quality of safety management and performance. The final point raised in this Keynote, is fundamental but missed by some. However cast, measured and managed, the concept of safety culture was never promoted as the sole determinant of safety management or the sole reason for safety failure. Therefore, judging the utility of the concept in relation to the quality of safety management in the nuclear industry can only be done logically in the context of those of the other factors involved.

Country or International Agency

United Kingdom

Primary author: COX, Sue (UK)

Presenter: COX, Sue (UK)

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