



Contribution ID: 70

Type: Poster

Safety Assessment in the AREVA Group: Operating Experience from a Self-Assessment Tool

Tuesday 23 February 2016 10:20 (30 minutes)

Synopsis

The expression “safety culture” first appeared following analysis of the Chernobyl accident in 1986. It was first defined in INSAG-4 (International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group safety series) in 1991. Other events have occurred in nuclear facilities and during transportation since Chernobyl: Tokai Mura in 1999, Roissy Transport in 2002, Davis Besse in 2002, Thorp in 2005. These events show that the initial approach was too simplistic. Based on this observation, the definition of safety culture was supplemented by including concepts of cultural value (associated with the country and the company) and human and organizational factors, and was integrated in that form with the emergence and implementation of integrated management systems (IMS).

Today, the concept of nuclear safety culture covers a wide set of factors such as safety, quality, corporate culture, defined processes and policies, organizations and related resources. Any assessment of people’s safety culture, particularly people directly involved in facility operations, is thus part of a comprehensive policy and contributes to a de facto demonstration of the priority which management assigns to safety.

In facilities considered to be complex systems, safety management is dependent on personnel’s level of risk awareness; in other terms, on the level of their safety culture. Safety culture assessment and how it is tracked over the long term thus represent two key objectives for the AREVA group and are integral to its continuous improvement policy.

Accordingly, AREVA developed a tool for the self-assessment of safety culture. Meant for line managers, the tool allows them to form a picture of their teams’ level of safety culture, directly and anonymously, thereby giving them additional means to identify areas for safety culture improvement. Through its questionnaire on the operators’ work, it also provides a concrete reflection of what the safety culture covers. Processing the results collectively gives the teams the opportunity to discuss safety culture, identify priority issues and, ultimately, improve their performance.

The tool is based on IAEA documents dealing with safety culture and methods for measuring and improving it.

AREVA’s safety culture self-assessment tool is presented in this article and in particular its objectives, construction, targets, methods of use and operational deployment. Inter-organizational comparisons and the statistical data processing made possible by the tool are also described. To conclude, the potential for improvements and initial operating experience from the tool’s deployment are discussed.

Country or International Agency

France

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Session Classification: Pause and Posters