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Dialogue Session Contributing Paper:The Regulatory Body's Perspectives on Safety Culture

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Synopsis

Safety Culture has traditionally been treated as an issue primarily related to the operators of nuclear (and other) installations. Although there is still a lack of consensus on many aspects of safety culture, there is meanwhile a large consensus on the importance of a good safety culture in each and every nuclear installation. As the Fukushima accident clearly highlighted, though, it is not enough to focus merely on licensees. There is a need to adopt a broader view on the entire overall system of stakeholders (such as manufacturers, contractors, international organisations, regulatory authorities, research organisations, as well as political institutions, the media and the public etc.) and on how the participants in this overall system mutually influence each other. Each participant in the system has its own specific (safety) culture, but at the same time it is part of the overall culture based on general societal norms and values.

Among the stakeholders who play an important role in the overall "nuclear system"and interact with the licensees are the regulators. They are concerned with the safety culture of the organisations they oversee and develop approaches and tools for oversight in the domain of safety culture. But this is only one perspective. The regulators'also deeply impact the licensees'safety culture. Their underlying values and norms concerning safety which manifest themselves in their regulatory approaches and activities, in the nature of relationships they cultivate with the licensees, in the issues they do or do not address in oversight etc. influence the licensees' safety culture, either positively or, in the worst case, even negatively. In other words, the regulatory body's own safety culture has an important effect on the licensees'safety culture.

Therefore, the regulatory body needs to take different perspectives on the issue of safety culture:

1. Safety culture as an oversight issue, with the need and challenge to develop suitable approaches and tools for oversight on the licensees'safety culture

2. Safety culture as an issue of self-reflection, in order to understand how the own (regulatory) safety culture (or oversight culture) influences the licensees'safety culture and to develop and apply appropriate regulatory approaches capable of positively influencing the licensees'safety culture.

It will be shown how ENSI has embraced these two perspectives on safety culture. ENSI's approach and practices on oversight of safety culture will be presented, as well as ENSI's project which has been conducted over three years after the Fukushima accident in order to initialise and institutionalise a self-reflection process on its own oversight culture.

Country or International Agency

Switzerland

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