Vision, Intuition and Smarts: Succeeding in Nuclear Communications

Sunni Locatelli, Director General
Strategic Communications Directorate
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Women in Nuclear Meet Atoms for Peace
IAEA Headquarters (Vienna, Austria)
Wednesday, August 26, 2015
Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

- Regulates the use of nuclear energy and materials to protect the health, safety and security of Canadians and the environment
- Implements Canada's international commitments on the peaceful use of nuclear energy
- Disseminates objective scientific, technical, and regulatory information to the public

Communications has a vital role
My Background

Career path

• Canada’s Prime Minister’s Office (8 years)
• Privy Council Office (2 years)
• Atomic Energy Control Board, now CNSC (17 years)

Current role and responsibilities

• Lead a team of 32 professionals in multiple communications fields (e.g., web and graphics, strategic advice, translation and editing, outreach coordination)
Making a Difference

Meet Stephanie Eisian
Vision

Career Path
I grew up in the Maritimes where there wasn’t much nuclear industry, but when the Westray coal mining accident happened in Nova Scotia, I was 11. The event hit me hard – my dad worked in an industrial environment, and the loss of 26 lives and the desire to help protect the public hit me hard. I knew then that industrial safety was what I wanted to pursue professionally. I completed a Bachelor of Science in Engineering at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and I was among the first group of students to complete a 13-month internship with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) from 2006 to 2007.

Role and Responsibilities
I act as the interface between the various facets of regulation for power reactors, specifically Darlington. My responsibilities include coordinating technical reviews, providing input to the licence application, and representing the interests of technical specialists and sometimes legal services to ensure that the positions formed and communicated through my director align with the mandates of the CNSC and Darlington’s operating licence, and are consistent across the Directorate of Power Reactor Regulation. My particular responsibilities within my team include the areas of operating performance and fitness for service. There are always lessons to be learned and room for improvement.

Special Achievements
I am particularly excited about having received an Excellence Award for my role as part of the design team for Exercise Unified Response, which took place in May 2014. It was a challenging and fun multidisciplinary exercise that tested my team. Additionally, I am proud to have been on the team for the annual public nuclear power plant review forums for 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Vision

Ensuring Safety

Making a difference

Desire to help protect the public

“The Westray coal mining accident... hit me hard... I knew then that industrial safety was what I wanted to pursue professionally.”
– Stephanie Eisian, Regulatory Program Officer

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
Women at the CNSC

- Of 878 CNSC employees, 48 percent are women
- Of 81 management positions, 31 percent are held by women
- Of a total professional staff of 588, 39 percent are female, of which approximately one-third have master’s degrees or PhDs
Communicating Nuclear
An exciting challenge

• Working with experts in scientific fields
• Communicating topics that are not widely understood – synthesizing technical information and scientific principles into plain language
• Creating and adapting products to respond to information needs of stakeholders

Using intuition, creativity and imagination
A Negative Public Stigma

- Events, pop culture - reinforce a risk bias

Risk bias: preference for complete elimination of a risk when alternative options produce greater reduction in risk overall

Nuclear becomes synonymous with fear
The CNSC’s Challenge: Science versus 24/7 media and the Internet

- Sound bites built for public consumption
- During Fukushima, everyone was a “nuclear expert”
- True experts – not media savvy
- Social media, Google – source of knowledge?
- Difficult for public to discern fact from fiction

An uphill battle
Meeting the Challenge:
Social media

- Taking advantage of multiple formats now available and social media platforms
- Using specialists to make the scientific aspect of our work more human

Women have a significant role
Meeting the Challenge: Credible spokespeople

- Commission level
- Senior management
- Specialists in all fields

From across the organization

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
We will never compromise safety...