Traits of a Positive Safety Culture

Experience has shown that certain personal and organizational traits are present in an organization that promotes a positive safety culture. The following are traits of a positive safety culture:

Leadership Safety Values and Actions

Leaders demonstrate a commitment to safety in their decisions and behaviors.

Problem Identification and Resolution

Issues potentially impacting safety are promptly identified, fully evaluated, and promptly addressed and corrected, commensurate with their significance.

Personal Accountability

All individuals take personal responsibility for safety.

Work Processes

The process of planning and controlling work activities is implemented so that safety is maintained.

Continuous Learning

Opportunities to learn about ways to ensure safety are sought out and implemented.

Environment for Raising Concerns

A safety-conscious work environment is maintained where personnel feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of retaliation, intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.

Effective Safety Communication

Communications maintain a focus on safety.

Respectful Work Environment

Trust and respect permeate the organization.

Questioning Attitude

Individuals avoid complacency and continuously challenge existing conditions and activities in order to identify discrepancies that might result in error or inappropriate action.

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive and there may be additional traits not included here that are also important in a positive safety culture.

Ohio Department of Health Mission

"To Protect and Improve the Health of All Ohioans by Preventing Disease, Promoting Good Health and Assuring Access to Quality Health Care"

The Bureau of Radiation Protection (BRP) supports the ODH mission through the regulation of the many medical, academic, industrial and research uses of radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment in Ohio. BRP program staff work to ensure that the possession, use, handling, storage and disposal of these beneficial materials and equipment is accomplished in a safe and secure manner that will protect the health of all Ohioans.

For additional information, please contact:

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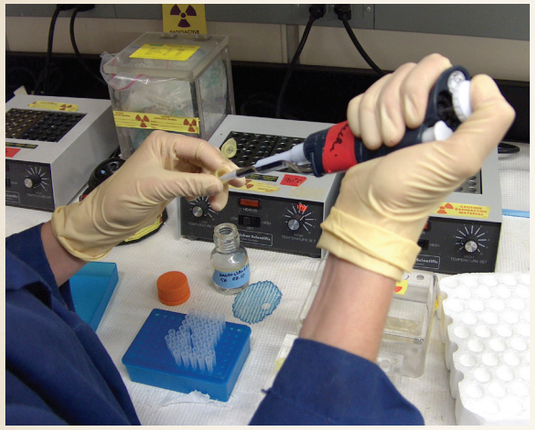
TO GET MORE INFORMATION FROM THE NRC:
www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/regulatory/enforcement/safety-culture.html

HEA 5506 (4/12)

Ohio Department of Health

Safety Culture Policy Statement



Definition of Safety Culture

Safety culture encompasses the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment by leaders and individuals to emphasize safety over competing goals (i.e., speed, profitability, staffing levels) to ensure protection of people and the environment.

Safety Culture Policy Statement

The information provided in this brochure outlines the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) expectation that individuals and organizations performing regulated activities involving radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment will establish and maintain a positive safety culture environment. The emphasis on safety culture should be commensurate with the safety and security significance of their activities and the nature and complexity of their organizational structure and functions.

A positive safety culture should be an integral part of all regulated activities, including training and licensure for operators and users; equipment operation and maintenance; and routine and emergency operating procedures. The intent of a positive safety culture, like all other aspects of an organization's radiation protection program, is to minimize radiation exposure to workers, patients and members of the public.

The policy statement applies to all radioactive material general and specific licensees, radiation-generating equipment registrants, individuals licensed as radiation-generating equipment operators or nuclear medicine technologists, and all other personnel involved in the possession, use, handling, storage and disposal of radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment in Ohio.

Regulation of Radioactive Material and Radiation-Generating Equipment in Ohio

ODH is the agency responsible for the regulation of the many medical, academic, industrial and research uses of radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment in Ohio. Radioactive materials oversight was granted to Ohio as an Agreement State in accordance with the Atomic Energy Act provision allowing such arrangements between the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the states. Radiation-generating equipment is regulated in accordance with rules adopted under Chapter 3748 of the Ohio Revised Code and through contractual agreements with the US Food and Drug Administration.

Background

The 1986 nuclear accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine revealed the importance of safety culture and the impact that weaknesses in safety culture can have on safety. Since then, the importance of a positive safety culture has been further demonstrated by a number of significant events around the world involving radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment. Assessments of these events revealed that safety culture weaknesses were an underlying cause or increased the severity of problems.

The NRC previously issued two policy statements related to safety culture. The "Policy Statement on the Conduct of Nuclear Power Plant Operations," released in 1989, applies to all individuals and activities at nuclear power plants. The 1996 "Freedom of Employees in the Nuclear Industry to Raise Safety Concerns Without Fear of Retaliation" policy statement applies to all NRC regulated activities. It provides the expectation that licensees establish and maintain work environments in which employees feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of retaliation. Ohio regulations provide similar protections to individuals applicable to activities carried out in this state, in accordance with rule 3701:1-38-09 of the Ohio Administrative Code.

In March 2011, the NRC approved their Safety Culture Policy Statement for those radioactive materials licensees subject to NRC oversight. Development of that policy statement included extensive outreach with a broad range of stakeholders. ODH has modified the NRC policy statement to address the importance of safety culture for both radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment used in Ohio. The ODH Bureau of Radiation Protection (BRP) views safety and security as primary pillars of any radiation protection program and as underlying principles of this Safety Culture Policy Statement.

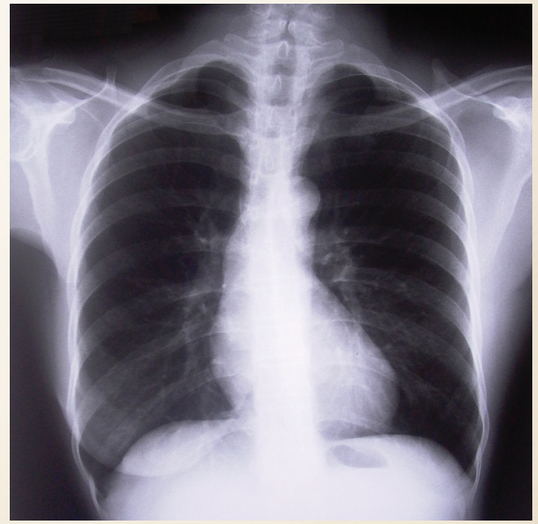
Importance for Regulated Entities

Industry experience has shown the value of establishing and maintaining a positive safety culture for programs utilizing radioactive materials and radiation-generating equipment. ODH believes that this value will become increasingly apparent through continued outreach activities focused on enhancing safety culture.

It is important to remember that individuals and organizations performing regulated activities bear the primary responsibility for safety and security. BRP does monitor and review trends in the performance of individuals and organizations to determine compliance with regulatory requirements and licensee commitments. This information may serve as an indicator of possible problem areas in an organization's safety culture.

However, BRP does not monitor or trend the traits described in this policy statement. The Safety Culture Policy Statement is not a regulation; therefore, it is the organization's responsibility, as part of its radiation protection program, to consider how to apply the information in the Safety Culture Policy Statement to promote and enhance a positive safety culture throughout its regulated activities.

Moving Forward

As the focus on a positive safety culture in radiation protection programs enters the next phase, BRP staff will continue efforts toward outreach, cooperation and interaction with stakeholders. During this phase, BRP staff will engage affected organizations and individuals and members of the public in dialogue to:

- Reinforce the importance of a positive safety culture in their specific activities.
- Seek out feedback on the ability of stakeholders to use the policy statement in those activities.
- Determine whether there are areas in the policy statement where changes may be appropriate.